Marxism Today

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Tributes to James Klugmann

Bob Rowthorn — Inflation and Crisis

Bert Ramelson — The Sixteenth Anniversary of the October Revolution

Ken Spours — Students, Education and the State

Discussion:
Ernest Eisler and
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Definitions of the Working Class

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Marxism Today

Theoretical and Discussion Journal of the Communist Party

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Editorial Correspondence
Martin Jacques, 16 King Street, WC2E 8HY

Advertisements
Doris Allison, above address

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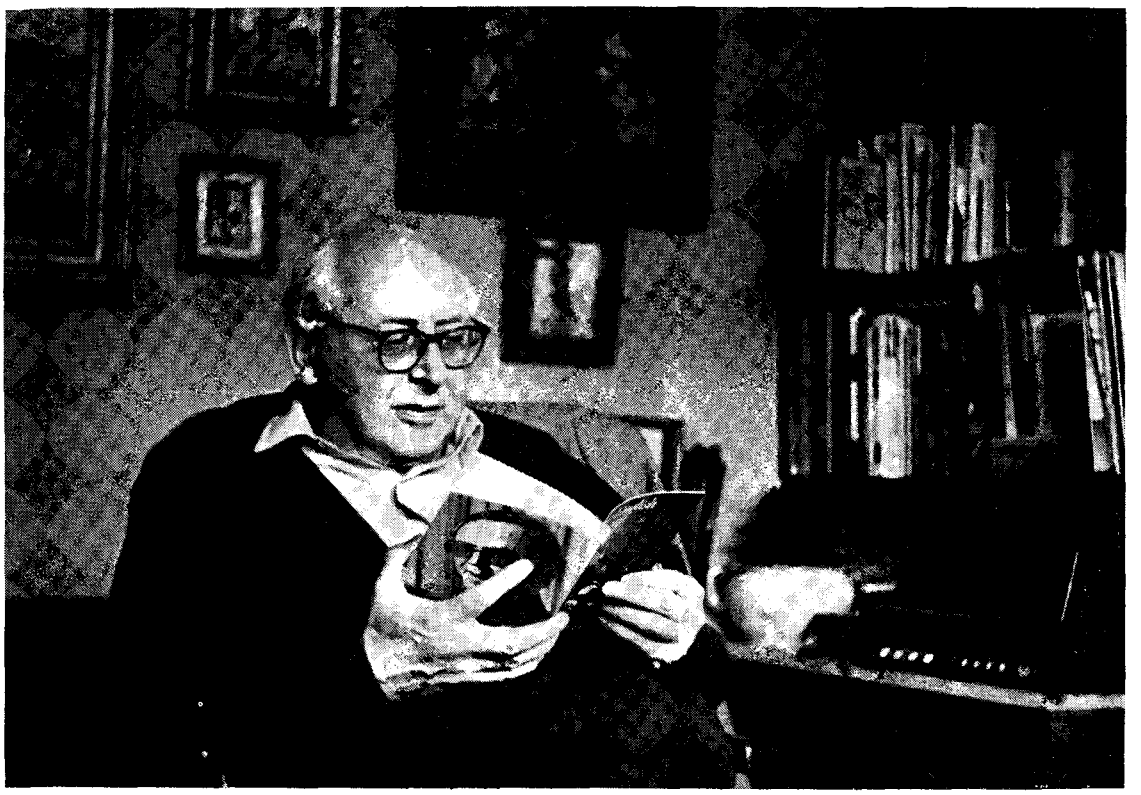

JAMES KLUGMANN

As our readers will be aware, James Klugmann, our Assistant Editor and Editor for 20 years from 1957 to 1977, died on September 14. In order to pay our tribute to him, we asked five people who have known James to write about different aspects of his life, activity and personality.

MARGOT HEINEMANN

James had begun to call himself some sort of Marxist by the time he left his public school. He went to Cambridge in 1931 and joined the Communist Party in 1933.

I first got to know him when I joined the Party in the following year. In the years that followed, he and his close friend John Cornford were the outstanding leaders and organisers of a strong and rapidly growing Communist organisation. What was new here was the conviction—which they were among the first Communists to seize upon—that the *great majority* of the student body could and must be won to side with the working class. No longer were students seen as a reactionary force out of which a few exceptional individuals would cross over to the workers.

With this conviction, Cambridge Communists helped to bring into being a powerful movement in which increasingly Communist and labour organisations, peace societies, Christian and Third World colonial students worked side by side. One remembers a few highlights. The warm reception organised by students in 1934 for the hunger-marchers passing through on their way to London. The opposition and lightning counter-demonstrations which baulked the efforts of Mosley's British Union of Fascists to break into the Universities. And after James himself had left, the great campaigns for the Spanish Republic to send food and medical aid, to demand arms.

To be a Communist student at Cambridge in those days was an inspiring thing: and this was very largely owing to James. I remember vividly his far-ranging, impressively informed political reports to CP or Socialist Society meetings.

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To despise study and neglect your academic work for politics James saw as a romantic evasion of responsibility. What the Party wanted from student work, he told us, was not just a handful of full-time revolutionaries, mostly unemployable (since only a few could really become that), but good scientists, historians, teachers, capable of bringing their own people to the side of the working class. After a controversial discussion on this point with Willie Gallacher in 1934, the branch adopted the slogan "Every Communist student a *good* student", and the tally of 'firsts' went up. Study groups organised by faculties began to work out some kind of Marxist approach to the subjects studied in the University and suggestions for better ways of teaching them—the beginnings of what later grew into the Communist Universities.

So it happened, as a result of this many-sided training, that from Cambridge, the centre of privileged education, an exceptional number of serious and committed comrades came to work—many for a life-time—in the socialist and labour movement.

James seemed then (though in fact he wasn't) older and more experienced than other students, and not only because at 27 his hair was going grey. He struck one as extraordinarily mature, far-sighted, realistic, with little of the sectarian narrowness and impatience which most of us had to overcome. You might say he was born grown-up and never got any older.

His approach to political work and Party recruiting was highly personal and human, always starting from where people were, respecting their beliefs and interests and seeking points of agreement. He already had his marvellous gift for making warm friendly contact with all sorts of people, above all he loved to laugh. The most committed and thoughtful of Communist leaders, he was also, indisputably, the funniest.

He was a brilliant student. He took a double first-class degree in modern languages and was awarded a research studentship. He could have become an outstanding academic, as indeed many of his Cambridge comrades did, with great benefit to the socialist movement. To the end of his life he was excited by the questions of Marxist literary and historical theory that opened up for him then. But it wasn't a time for planning careers, with world war looming ahead. Like most of us, James would have been surprised, I think, to know he would still be alive 40 years afterwards. And no one who knew him then or later will doubt that he was right when from 1936 onwards (with the interval of the war) he chose to devote all his energy to Communist political work.

BRIAN SIMON

In 1935, on leaving Cambridge, James went to Paris to act as Secretary of the World Student Association, which aimed to unite the broad, democratic student movements developing in many countries as a direct result of the world economic crisis, the struggles for national liberation in colonial countries and the growing menace of fascism in Europe. James's grasp of the problems of these movements, and their importance, stemmed partly from his close friendship with Indians and Sri Lankians, and others at Cambridge; for instance, Mohan Kumaramangalam, a brilliant Indian member of the Communist Party (and one-time President of the Union), Peter Keunemann (for years now Secretary of the Sri Lanka Communist Party), students from China and many others. With his mature political outlook, amazing grasp of the languages and of the culture and politics of different countries, he now took a leading part in an important international organisation.

Memories of James at that time see him as surrounded with groups of students—Spanish students, in particular, since one object of the WSA was to organise and win support internationally for the fight in Spain—in which the Spanish student union played a leading part—but also students from Indonesia, North and South America, France, China and elsewhere.

In 1938 James, with others, visited the liberated areas of China and himself learned at first hand about the conditions of struggle there—meeting, incidentally, many ex-students he had known in Paris and England.

The defence of the universities, seen as 'fortresses of democracy', was at that time a major slogan; given the attack on the universities (and science) by the Nazis in Germany and the threat of fascism to all forms of freedom and culture. The setting up of workers' universities in Spain, the defence of Madrid University against Franco's forces, was paralleled in China by the establishment of universities in the 8th Army's liberated area, and by the activities of the advanced progressive student movement in Indonesia, India and elsewhere fighting in conditions of imperialism for the right to access to science and culture.

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All this was reflected in the work—and the life—of the WSA in Paris—a centre of solidarity; of intense discussion on every kind of political and cultural issue, of comradeship and laughter, and of absolute commitment. It is the carrying over of this atmosphere, this feeling for youth and the spirit of that time by James that made him so great an inspiration to, as well as comrade of, the young today. In his person he passed on to them the tradition of this time transmuting it into the spirit called for in the conditions of today.

In 1939 the WSA organised an international conference on the eve of the war, attended by many involved in the student movement in England. This was prepared with all James's usual meticulous care. For each country documents were drawn up analysing the roots of the democratic progressive movement and tradition, defining the existing position and pointing to concrete means by which the struggle could be raised to a higher stage. The speed of development at that time, in all parts of the world, was extraordinary. James Klugmann was one of the few people able to keep a grasp of this in his mind; to participate in discussions on any relevant issue, to point the way forward; and *always*, as was characteristic of him right through his life, to remain optimistic, positive in his outlook, encouraging everyone, without exception.

His humanity, modesty, genuine selflessness and, above all, his interest in people, however inexperienced, haltering or hesitant, made him an ideal teacher and lecturer of the democratic world student movement at a crucial historical phase.

PETE CARTER

My relationship with James began in 1962 when I was elected national organiser of the Young Communist League, which entailed a move from Birmingham to London.

My office was right next to James's, with the added bonus of a window between us which gave a panoramic view of his rotund splendour. Up till this time I never liked the middle class; I was always suspicious of them, and could not comprehend what role they had to play in a revolutionary party. But as I got to know James, and learned so much from him, this view changed radically.

Often I listened in on the rarified discussions that took place in his small 9′ x 3′ room. The level of the debates used to hum; I was unable to understand half the words, they seemed so far removed from the language I was accustomed to in *my* 'university'—the building site.

The debate over, and during those few moments when James was alone, he would look through the window and pull faces at me. I thought this very strange at first, but it was the beginning of a realisation as to the immense character he had. He would beckon me into his office, and his first words were, "You didn't understand all that, did you?", and before I could say no, he retorted, "Neither did I". But then in a modest way he would say what he thought it was all about, and the explanation as to what had taken place never ceased to impress me.

For James's greatest strength was his ability to explain the most complex of ideas in easy language. He used to say, "What is the point of rarified debate if it remains in the domain of a handful?" He was always highly critical of intellectuals who felt that their status depended on the use of words nobody had heard of—and of that special brand of intellectuals who invent new ones.

I grew to love James during the six years we lived together in Clapham. As long as I live I shall never forget the day James moved in. Four big removal lorries arrived. I was looking through the window thinking, "Jesus Christ, this fellow's got some furniture!" But, alas, all that came out of the lorries was two chairs, two tables, a bed, a cupboard and a few suitcases; the rest was wholely taken up with tea-chests full of books. I could sympathise with the removal men; I knew exactly what they were thinking, especially as most workers have childhood memories that excludes any reference to books.

Months of painstaking work followed getting his books in some sort of order. Every available wall in the house was taken over by the books. There were many thousands of them, filling every wall of every room, every staircase, nook and cranny, and at one stage even in the bog; and had it not been for us explaining that some people liked to bath, then the bathroom would have been converted into a pamphlet room!

His library is unique; it is a lifetime's work, and priceless; and James's wish is for it to be used to help future students of politics understand revolutionary ideas. The books, the pamphlets, the papers and his pottery, are what James devoted himself to over a lifetime, collecting all that represented the various aspects of struggle of people fighting

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to end oppression and to bring about socialism.

James loved books, and he also loved children, and children loved him. We lived above the books in a small two-roomed flat. James even tried to negotiate for space there, but we stood firm against that idea. Sue was two, and Mike was just born, and immediately they took to James. He had this extraordinary ability to reduce his intellectual capacity to that of whatever age the child might be. He was great at pulling funny faces, communicating with strange sounds, at initiating all sorts of original games that had the children wild with excitement. Norma used to look after James, and trying to keep the house clean, with two small kids, made every day a full and exhausting one. But she loved James every bit as much as the kids did.

He was an amazing person—even his eating habits are worthy of mention. Norma used to describe him as the 'human dustbin', in that he would eat anything and as much as you could possibly serve up. You could not help but get the feeling through James and his love for grub, that the world food crisis was near.

On equal footing with the books in his bedroom was his food store. Mountains of tinned food, piles of pre-packed food, stacks of biscuits. It had to be seen to be believed. To have breakfast with James sometimes meant eating bacon in 1967 which was labelled 'eat before Jan. 14, 1964'—but he did not seem to mind the gamey taste, though some of us did counsel caution and settled for an egg that had hard boiled itself out of protest!

For readers of *Marxism Today*, this might sound a funny sort of obituary. But that's how it was with James. Never a dull moment. He was a colourful character in every sense of the word. He had a deep commitment to the working class; he just loved people, and displayed an enormous zest for living.

Above all, he was a living example of the distinct role of an intellectual in a revolutionary party. For the middle class he was an ambassador, and proved by his contribution and example the natural and essential alliance between the middle class and working class, and of the absolute necessity for this enriching alliance if we are to achieve socialism in Britain.

Finally, I would like to say a few words to today's intellectuals: I would ask them to follow the example of James Klugmann, learn from him, try to develop a humanity and modesty, and above all learn from his ability to explain complex ideas in a way everyone can understand. It is not an academic gift learned at University, but an understanding that develops from close contact with the working class and the assimilation of a working class point of view.

Such a development would minimise James's loss to the movement, and would be something that he would have been proud to have left behind.

Goodbye, James—from a worker who will never forget you.

LAURENCE BRIGHT

The Christian-Marxist dialogue was right up James' street. Though to him Christianity was an aberration he couldn't share, there was no lack of sympathy for it. He'd done his homework with characteristic thoroughness, he knew the right kind of question to ask, and his point would be pressed firmly home, however painless he made the process seem.

Perhaps we weren't quite the right Christian group to have begun dialogue with, back in the sixties. Most of us in 'Slant' were Marxists anyway, or at least of the left, and our Christianity wasn't exactly the sort of thing you could hear thundered from Irish pulpits. But out of these private meetings came requests for public debate, usually from student groups. They ranged from small club meetings to full-scale 'missions'. I forget how many of these he and I did together; enough, certainly, for me to recognise his integrity and appreciate his skill.

James loved speaking to this sort of gathering—that was the immediately obvious thing. The Marxist approach to our subject would come across with great force, straightforwardly but with the right amount of anecdote to hold the attention. Not that he ever found holding people's attention difficult. It was easy to follow on. I could state with complete sincerity that I agreed with every word that had just been said. This didn't go down well with the kind of person for whom 'Christian' was just a longer way of spelling 'Tory' (there were always a fair sprinkling of them present, hoping to see Goliath floored) but interestingly it was usually James who afterwards received the indignant rebuttals disguised as questions. This showed him at his best. He could discover the core of need in the most aggressive or plain dotty remarks. He never gave up until at least something had got across. Everyone got the same careful treatment. He really liked people,

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which is why I find it hard to suppose that anyone ever really disliked him.

That was especially plain after a meeting, at the bar or over coffee in a student's room. How he stood the smoke and heat with his bad chest I don't know, but he'd listen and he'd talk, faster and with more interjections as he warmed to the theme—'d'you understand me?'—and his laugh was infectious. No doubt he was a complex man, but to me it was his single-mindedness that came acrossl

This country has not experienced the straight political confrontation between Christian and Communist familiar in France or Italy. Dialogue has been no easier for that, since interest had first to be created. If a whole generation of students has grown up, not necessarily converted, but at least with a better understanding of why truth lies on the left, much of that is due to James Klugmann. My own debt to him is very real. We are all poorer for his death.

JACK COHEN

It has been my great good fortune to have worked with James in many of his most important spheres of work—originally in the student movement and latterly in Communist Party education, the Marxist-Christian dialogue and *Marxism Today*.

As Arnold Kettle has said, James was a teacher of genius. Hundreds, probably thousands of Communist Party and YCL members experienced the superb quality of his teaching at first hand. Many more, non-party people, heard him at the public lectures he gave, while Quakers, Methodists, Catholics and Anglicans made his acquaintance through the 'dialogues' in which he played such an outstanding part.

It is almost impossible to convey the flavour of a lecture by James. It was compounded of simplicity based on immense knowledge, humour, but above all on profound respect for his listeners and a deep sense of his responsibility as a Party educator. This was reflected in the meticulous care which went into the preparation of all his talks.

There is a theory that people can only concentrate on a talk for 45 minutes. James broke this resistance barrier with ease. The spell of his wit and wisdom, the vast knowledge which all felt he was sharing with them as equals, the alternation of serious exposition with jokes and stories illustrating complex ideas, riveted them all no matter how long he spoke.

He—a most brilliant lecturer—always emphasised that the task of Communist educators was not to show how clever they were, but "to help people to do things better than you could yourself . . . to release forces for the fight for socialism that are higher than your own". And he himself always practised what he preached.

He brought to *Marxism Today* the same dedication, sense of responsibility and meticulous attention to detail which marked his approach to all his many-sided and important activities. His outstanding contribution as editor and writer are well known. Space permits only brief comment on one or two other aspects.

Marxism Today had an editorial staff of only two, latterly only one and a half, and a part-time secretary. The editorial office was the smallest of rooms cluttered with books from floor to ceiling, overflowing on to the editor's desk where they joined Communist journals in many languages and mountains of precariously balanced files which threatened to collapse (and frequently did) at any moment.

Diversions at our 'editorial conferences' were processions of visiting colleagues wanting to consult him, countless telephone calls from would-be Ph.Ds wanting to discuss their theses, from undergraduates wanting advice on what to read for their subjects, from Party and other organisations wanting him to speak, enquiries from bodies like the BBC and others about the possible use of his priceless collection of prints and pictures, calls from old and new friends from all parts of Britain and the world eager to see him etc.

Yet throughout all these and many regular crises—failure of articles promised to materialise, difficulties because articles set up were either too long or too short, James, although tensed, always found a solution somehow.

As editor he was utterly opposed to any interference with what any contributor had written and would never attempt to change a word or a comma except in cases where he thought personal attacks or wounding statements were being made. Freedom for all points of view in articles or discussion was a hall-mark of our journal under his editorship.

The prestige which *Marxism Today* enjoys in Britain and throughout the world is due overwhelmingly to the way he directed it during his years as editor. It will remain a lasting and fitting memorial to one of the most outstanding and beloved British Marxists of our time.

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Inflation and Crisis

Bob Rowthorn

(The author is a Lecturer in Economics at Cambridge University, and a member of the Communist Party Economic Committee. He is co-author of the pamphlet "Britain's Economic Crisis: Causes and Cures", which has been widely circulated in the labour and progressive movement.)

Inflation is a subject which has caused deep divisions of opinion within the Left, both in Britain and elsewhere. There is little agreement about either its causes or cures, and the debate between rival schools of thought has been intense and at times bitter, which is not really suprising as the issues at stake are important, and the theoretical and practical questions involved are difficult. The complexity of the subject and the extent of disagreement are clearly visible in the *Marxism Today* debate on inflation which was originally sparked off by Pat Devine's article of March 1974.[1] It is not, however, my intention to describe or criticise the various positions taken in this debate, for many of the views expressed are correct in their own way and the problem is not to decide in favour of one side or another, but rather to find a wider framework within which their positive insights can be encompassed.

A start has already been made in this direction by Laurence Harris in his recent article in *Marxism Today* and by John Grahl and others in their joint contribution to the Party *Economic Bulletin*.[2] They argue that, in the advanced capitalist world, inflation is closely connected with the process of capital accumulation and with attempts by the state to regulate this process, and in consequence any adequate analysis of inflation must base itself on the more general theory of accumulation and crisis. This approach is in my opinion correct and it will be the main theme of the present article. The plan of the article is as follows. Part One describes the basic analysis of accumulation and crisis which is contained in the writings of Karl Marx. Part Two examines how this analysis must be modified to take account of the modern state which plays a far more active role than Marx assumed and seeks to control both the pace and direction of capitalist expansion. In the course of this discussion it argues that the state may deliberately foster inflation as a convenient way of handling problems which it is unable or unwilling to tackle in a more fundamental way. Part Three considers the practical implications of this view, and argues that the wages struggle must not be seen and must not be fought in isolation from the wider political struggle for an alternative economic policy which would make possible the satisfaction of working class demands.

I. THE SELF-REGULATING ECONOMY

Marx states in a preface to *Capital* that his aim is to "lay bare the economic law of motion of modern society". To this end he identified two basic features of a capitalist economy which differentiates it from other kinds of economy. Firstly, there is a division of labour in which individual producers specialise in producing particular goods and services which they exchange in return for money. The activities of these various producers are not consciously co-ordinated by a central planning agency, as under socialism, but are blindly controlled by the market. Producers base their decisions on how they think the market will behave: how much they will pay for what they purchase, and how much they will receive for what they sell. What happens to the economy as a whole is not consciously decided by anyone, but is the result of independent decisions by countless individuals whose only links with each other are through the market. Secondly, a capitalist economy is divided into antagonistic classes: capitalists who organise production and workers who work under their control. Workers are not legally compelled to accept this subordinate position but in practice they have no choice. Capitalists own the factories, materials and other means of production without which it is impossible to produce, so workers cannot survive on their own and are forced to earn their living by working for others, or as Marx put it "by selling their labour-power".

Thus, Marx characterised capitalism as an unplanned economy divided into antagonistic classes, whose motion is determined by the interaction of countless individual producers and consumers, buyers and sellers, workers and capitalists, all of whom are legally free to pursue their own self-interest. At first sight it might appear that such an economy would be a complete mess without any coherent pattern, but Marx, like the classical

[1] For clear summary of this debate up until the end of 1976 see James Harvey "Theories of Inflation", *Marxism Today*, January 1977.

[2] Laurence Harris "Economic Policy and Marxist Theory", *Marxism Today*, April 1977: John Grahl, David Curry, Sam Aaronovitch, *Economic Bulletin*, Autumn 1977.

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economists before him, argued that this is not the case, that the economy obeys definite laws, and that out of the apparent chaos there emerges spontaneously a certain order. The interplay of supply and demand automatically co-ordinates the different parts of the economy and makes it function coherently. For example, when there is too much of a particular commodity its price falls and firms produce less, when there is too little its price rises and firms produce more, and in this way production is brought into line with social requirements. Thus, market forces automatically control the division of labour and the economy is able to regulate itself without external intervention. Now, Marx knew very well that no actual economy is allowed to function in quite such an automatic fashion and he mentions a number of ways in which the state may intervene in its operation. But his observations on the state are of secondary importance in comparison with his main theme which is concerned with capitalism's ability to regulate itself without state intervention and to generate spontaneously a particular form of economic development. For the most part, he keeps the state firmly in the background and assigns to it a minimal role; nowhere in his writing does the state intervene in a systematic way to control the rhythm and direction of economic expansion.

Crises

Bourgeois apologists always portray the process of self-regulation as a harmonious affair, in which supply and demand operate smoothly and painlessly to co-ordinate the various parts of the economy. Marx's picture is very different. Capitalist development is extremely irregular, and is characterised by wild bursts of accumulation interspersed with periods of crisis and depression, by a violent alternation of boom and slump. During the expansionary phase imbalances arise which eventually become unsustainable. The rate of profit falls sharply, expansion grinds to a standstill, and there is a crisis in which factories cut back production and workers are laid off. But this crisis does not last forever and, after a time, investment becomes once more profitable, the economy begins to expand, and the whole cycle starts once again. Now, to those who suffer their effects, crises appear like a terrible nightmare, a horrific accident, but within the brutal logic of capitalism they have a function. They are the means by which the economy spontaneously regulates itself and eliminates obstacles which have arisen during the course of expansion. In the crisis weaker firms are driven out of business, production is reorganised, the working class is disciplined, and the conditions for profitable expansion are re-established. In this way the path is cleared for a new burst of accumulation. As Marx says: "from time to time the conflict of antagonistic agencies finds vent in crises. The crises are always but momentary and forcible solutions of the existing contradictions. They are violent eruptions which for a time restore the general equilibrium".

There are many different kinds of imbalance which may interfere with the smooth accumulation of capital, and Marx himself mentions quite a few, although he gives prominence to just two of them: a rising organic composition of capital and rising wages, each of which may lead to a fall in the average rate of profit. Now, Marxists have argued interminably about which is the primary factor behind economic crises, but there is really no general answer, for any kind of imbalance of contradiction, if severe enough, can cause a crisis. Indeed most actual crises are the result of a combination of different factors, none of which is by itself sufficient to cause a crisis, but which collectively are able to do so by forcing the rate of profit down to the point where capitalists refuse to accumulate.

Wages

As an example of capitalism's ability to regulate itself, let us consider the question of wages. Marx's writing on this subject is not very consistent and he oscillates between a variety of different views. In *Capital*, for example, when he is dealing with accumulation and crises, he implies that wages are determined purely by supply and demand, they rise *automatically* when labour is scarce because capitalists are forced to compete amongst themselves for new workers and to keep their existing workforce, and when labour is plentiful wages fall *automatically* because workers compete for the few jobs available. This view is most clearly stated in the following passage where Marx is discussing the effect of the 'reserve' army of unemployed and semi-employed labour on wages:

> "Taking them as a whole, the general movements of wages are *exclusively regulated* by the expansion and contraction of the industrial reserve army, and these again correspond to the periodic changes of the industrial cycle" (my italics).

In other words, wages rise automatically in booms and fall automatically in slumps. This is a very extreme position, of course, and elsewhere, in his pamphlet *Wages, Price and Profit*, Marx replaces the rigid expression 'exclusively regulates' by the more flexible term 'depends upon'. He says:

> "the value of labour . . . always depends upon supply and demand, I mean the demand for labour on the part of capital, and the supply of labour by the working men".

This formulation allows for the influence of factors other than supply and demand. Indeed, the entire pamphlet was intended as a rebuttal of Citizen

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Weston's view that trade unions cannot raise wages nor can they prevent wage reductions. Marx replies that, provided they are well organised, trade unions can do both of these things. In fact, he says that the actual level of wages is determined by the struggle between capital and labour, and that the "matter resolves itself into a question of the respective power of the combatants". Clearly, this struggle does not take place in a vacuum, and both the fighting strength of trade unions and the room for advance depend on economic circumstances. When times are good the balance of power is favourable to labour, and workers can achieve better results than when times are bad, but even so the outcome is not just a passive reflection of economic circumstances, and a well-organised trade union movement may operate quite effectively in the face of substantial unemployment.

No matter how strongly organised the trade union movement is, however, there are inherent limits to the effectiveness of purely economic struggle[3]. Capitalists control production and they will not invest unless they receive a certain 'normal' rate of profit. If wages rise too rapidly, either because of extreme labour shortage or because of militant trade unionism, the rate of profit falls below its 'normal' level, capitalists refuse to invest, expansion grinds to a standstill and there is a crisis. This crisis has two effects. Firstly, it brings about changes in the sphere of production so that weaker capitals are weeded out and there is a general improvement in production techniques. In consequence, when the economy eventually recovers, less labour is needed than previously and productivity rises sharply as the potential of these new techniques is exploited. Secondly, the crisis leads to a sharp increase in unemployment, which brings home to workers the precariousness of their position and forces them to moderate their demands or even to accept a reduction in wages. So the crisis restores profitability by affecting both wages and production. By terrorising the working class it holds their demands in check, and by forcing a re-organisation of production it increases the ability of capitalism to meet these demands.[4] In this way the crisis spontaneously regulates the relationship between capital and labour, and re-establishes the conditions for profitable accumulation. Naturally, this is not a permanent solution, and there will eventually be another crisis, caused either by the tendency for wages to outstrip productivity, or by some other factor or combination of factors.

To sum up. In the course of a boom the demand for labour may rise so quickly that the reserve army of unemployed and underemployed labour is reduced in size. This strengthens the bargaining position of workers and helps them force up wages. If wages rise so much that the rate of profit is forced below its 'normal' level, capitalists refuse to invest and the result is a crisis. During this crisis changes occur which make investment once more profitable, and after a time the economy will begin to expand once again. A strong and militant trade union movement may force up wages and resist wage cuts even in the face of high unemployment. In a boom situation this may squeeze profits and bring expansion to a premature end, whilst there is still a large surplus of labour; and in a depression it may delay recovery by reducing profitability. This may sound like a condemnation of the trade union movement, but it is not. It is simply stating the obvious fact that, so long as capitalists control production, they hold the whip hand, and workers cannot afford to be too successful in the wages struggle. If they are, capitalists respond by refusing to invest, and the result is a premature or longer crisis. To escape from this dilemma workers must go beyond purely economic struggle and must fight at the political level to exert control over production itself.

Prices

Crises occur when the rate of profit falls so low that capitalists refuse to invest. Now, if capitalists could fix prices at any level they chose, a crisis could never occur, because any tendency for the rate of profit to fall could be offset by an increase in prices. Higher prices would insulate the rate of profit from forces which might otherwise cause it to fall, such as higher wages or taxes, or a rise in the organic composition of capital. This would, of course, have serious consequences for Marx's analysis of capitalist development which relies on a falling rate of profit to explain crises. In preventing crises it would remove one of the basic mechanisms by which capitalism regulates itself and eliminates the imbalances which arise in the course of expansion. So clearly, if Marx's analysis is to remain valid, there must be something which prevents capitalists from raising prices and passing on higher costs (or taxes) to the consumer. And, indeed, there is. Capitalists are subject to a monetary discipline which prevents them from arbitrarily raising the overall level of prices. This works as follows. National currency is linked to gold at a fixed parity, so that its purchasing

[3] The argument contained in the following paragraph is never stated by Marx in so many words, and is a synthesis of his discussion of crises in *Capital*, and of trade unions in *Wages, Price and Profit*.

[4] Through its effect on wages (and the intensity and length of the working day) the crisis helps restore profitability by increasing the amount of 'absolute surplus value', and through its effect on productivity it works by increasing the amount of 'relative surplus value'.

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power rises or falls with that of gold. To ensure that the national currency behaves in this way is the responsibility of the Central Bank, and Marx considers several ways in which it might achieve this objective. However, the details do not concern us here, for what really matters is that national currency is linked to gold and is, for practical purposes, interchangeable with gold. Marx argued that this would impose a discipline on prices, because gold has an intrinsic value of its own which regulates its purchasing power and thereby regulates the purchasing power of national currency.

Thus, the discipline of gold prevents capitalists from raising prices so as to maintain the rate of profit, and Marx's basic analysis is saved; when serious imbalances arise in the course of expansion the rate of profit begins to fall, capitalists cannot protect themselves by raising prices because they are prevented from doing so by the discipline of gold, and in consequence there is eventually a crisis. Later, we shall see how governments seek to avoid crises by relaxing the discipline of gold and allowing firms to raise their prices. Indeed, we shall argue that modern inflation is a means by which governments seek to raise the rate of profit so as to foster the accumulation of capital, and avoid or ameliorate crises. In this way they seek to block one of the internal mechanisms by which capitalism spontaneously regulates itself and eliminates obstacles to profitable expansion. Marx, however, was not primarily concerned with conscious attempts to control economic development, but with the automatic mechanisms by which capitalism controls itself, and for this reason he ignored the question of inflation and made assumptions which would ensure that prices remained fairly stable.

II. THE MODERN STATE

We have seen how Marx rather neglected the state in order to concentrate on the automatic mechanisms of self-regulation which he considered to be so characteristic of capitalist economies. Let us now examine how the modern state seeks to obstruct, complement or replace these mechanisms so as to exert conscious control over the economy. We have already mentioned inflation in this context but, before dealing with the question of rising prices, let us consider other methods of control. Broadly speaking, these other methods seek to achieve one or both of the following objectives: (1) reduce pressures on the rate of profit by cutting costs or taxes, or (2) reduce the 'normal' rate of profit so that the economy functions with lower profits than was previously the case. Each of these aims may be achieved in a variety of different ways and, although there is no space to discuss them in detail, some deserve explicit mention. Costs may be reduced in a conservative or revolutionary way. The conservative way is to reduce the standard of living of the working class or some other section of society like the peasantry, either by reducing their income or making them work harder. This may be done directly through, for example, an incomes policy, or indirectly through redistributive taxation. The revolutionary way is to produce more efficiently by re-organising production and adopting more advanced techniques. This may require a systematic policy which includes such measures as the compulsory merger or nationalisation of certain existing firms, state support for research and development, the education of a skilled labour force, and so on. Instead of reducing costs the state may simply cut taxes levied on profits, and either shift the tax burden onto some other section of the population or reduce its own expenditure. These are some of the ways in which the rate of profit can be increased. An alternative policy is to accept a lower rate of profit as inevitable or desirable, and take steps to ensure that investment and expansion continue unhindered.[5] Short of nationalising most of the big firms or directly instructing them what to do, the scope for such a policy is, of course, rather limited. Even so, by a combination of investment incentives, direct controls, and negotiated agreements, it may be possible to produce some reduction in the 'normal' rate of profit which is required for expansion.

The Limits of State Intervention

If state intervention of the above kind were always successful, there would be neither crises nor inflation, and expansion could be sustained indefinitely without any rise in the general price level. But such a scenario assumes that the state has unlimited power and that it exercises this power without any political constraints. In reality, the state apparatus is an historical creation which, at any particular moment, is only able to perform certain tasks, and to modify this may require time, and may be resisted by forces inside and outside of the apparatus itself. Moreover, the actual use of state power is a political question, for what is beneficial to some may be harmful to others, and particular forms of intervention may have far-reaching strategic consequences. And, finally, individual countries exist in a world economy over which many of them exert very little influence, and are often forced to adapt themselves to world events beyond their control.

The history of post-war capitalism contains all

[5] The 'surplus' of a nationalised firm has a different economic significance from the 'profit' received by a private firm. In the text, however, this difference is ignored, and the terms 'profit' and 'rate of profit' refer to both private and public enterprises without distinction.

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these features. In the liberal environment of the fifties and sixties, capitalist states failed to develop the machinery required for a concerted intervention in the private sector, and in some cases even dismantled part of the machinery already in existence. Both the development and use of the state apparatus has been inhibited by the open or latent hostility of rival classes. Capitalists and workers have resisted changes which would have harmed them materially, or those long-term political consequences they found objectionable. For example, Tony Benn's proposals for modernising British industry made good sense, but they were seen as the thin end of the socialist wedge, and were bitterly opposed despite their potential benefit to many British firms. Indeed, the whole of post-war British history illustrates how class conflict may result in a stalemate: neither Left nor Right has been strong enough to impose its own definitive solution and create a state apparatus which is able to tackle the underlying problems of the British economy. And, finally, on an international plane, the problems of economic control have become greater with the decline of the United States as a world power and the collapse of the colonial empires. Here is an example. Just after the Second World War the United States provided assistance in the form of Marshall Aid to the old imperial powers such as Britain and France. In return they agreed to foster the exploitation of minerals and raw materials in their imperial territories. This ensured a cheap and plentiful supply of primary products during the 1950s and '60s. Such an agreement would be impossible today; there is no country able to control the development of primary products, and in consequence their future supply is very uncertain.

A Dilemma

Suppose the state is unable or unwilling to intervene on a scale sufficient to ensure both a sustained expansion and stable prices. Then it is in a dilemma and must abandon one or both of these objectives. It may decide to bring expansion to an end and provoke a crisis, in the hope that this will (a) spontaneously solve some of the underlying problems of the economy in the ways we have described above, and (b) make possible new forms of state intervention which were not feasible during the preceding boom, such as a draconian incomes policy or drastic industrial restructuring. Now, for obvious reasons, a crisis is not exactly an attractive proposition to either workers or capitalists, and the state may be tempted to choose the other alternative, and accept rising prices as the inevitable cost of economic growth. It will therefore create the conditions under which firms can raise prices, pass on higher costs and taxes to the consumer, and thereby maintain the rate of profit at a level which they regard as satisfactory. This is the inflationary way of fostering economic expansion.

During the post-war period most governments have used inflation as a deliberate instrument of policy. They have been unable or unwilling to intervene on a scale sufficient to resolve the basic contradictions of capitalist development, and yet they have been unwilling to face the consequences of a potentially very serious crisis. Where imbalances have arisen which threaten to squeeze profits and provoke a crisis, governments have used their control over expenditure to maintain demand. This has created relatively buoyant demand conditions and allowed firms to raise prices, and thereby maintain or even increase the rate of profit. In consequence the role of gold has changed, so that it no longer acts as a discipline on prices as Marx assumed it would.

As a rule, demand has not been maintained specifically to allow firms to increase their prices, but in response to some other pressure, such as the need to maintain full employment or provide cheap finance for industry. On the other hand, when firms have made use of favourable demand conditions in order to raise their prices, governments have not usually prevented them from doing so. Price controls, even where they have been imposed, have usually been applied in a half-hearted fashion, and firms have been allowed to pass on all or a part of any higher costs or taxes. So, it has clearly been government policy to allow higher prices, and to this extent we can say that inflation is a *deliberate* policy designed to foster the accumulation of capital by maintaining or even raising the rate of profit.[6]

No Solution

Keynesians used to argue that a little inflation is a good thing because it keeps up profits by reducing the real purchasing power of wages. As events have shown, however, this argument contains a serious flaw, for it ignores the inherently unstable nature of the inflationary process. At first, when prices rise, people are caught unawares and can do very little to protect themselves. After a time, however, they realise what is happening and take steps to defend themselves. Workers seek compensation for past losses and may even seek additional wage increases to offset the effect of *future* price increases; the interval between wage settlements becomes smaller,

[6] This does not mean that inflation is a simple conspiracy against the working class, for there are times when it is in the interest of workers to support higher prices. For example, during the transition to socialism under a Left government there will still be private firms in existence whose operations must be profitable if they are to survive, and the best way of ensuring that may be to let them raise their prices.

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and in extreme conditions wage rates may be adjusted every week or even every day; the unorganised begin to organise in an attempt to protect themselves; interest rates rise to offset the effects of a depreciating currency; speculators begin to hoard materials or purchase property in the expectation of future price increases. In this way inflation gets built into the system and to maintain a given rate of profit requires ever larger price increases. The result is an accelerating spiral of rising prices, taxes and costs.

No country can withstand such a process indefinitely, for if unchecked it will eventually destroy confidence in the national currency and cause severe economic disruption. Moreover, well before this point is reached, popular discontent begins to manifest itself and the state comes under growing pressure to stabilise prices. At a certain stage, inflation ceases to be a practical way of fostering economic expansion and evading the problems which expansion creates. These problems must be resolved, and the state faces a choice. Either it tackles these problems directly, by intervening in the private sector to produce the required changes, or else it must provoke a crisis in the hope that this will help set things right. There are various ways of provoking a crisis, but all of them have one thing in common. They all involve some restriction on the ability of capitalists to raise prices and keep up their profits. A deflationary budget does this by reducing the level of demand and creating a more competitive market environment in which firms are frightened to raise their prices for fear of losing their markets; direct controls achieve the same result by making it illegal for firms to raise prices by more than a specified amount. Whichever method the state chooses the result is the same. Profits are squeezed, firms refuse to invest and there is a crisis.

So inflation provides a temporary respite but it does not remove the basic dilemma. Capitalism's spontaneous way of regulating itself is by means of periodic crises, and the only long-term alternative is to replace this self-regulating mechanism so that crises become unnecessary. Indeed, inflation may actually make things worse in the long-run, for it allows the situation to drift and provides an excuse for doing nothing, so that when a decision must eventually be made the problem is even more difficult to handle, and requires either more intervention or a deeper crisis than would have originally been necessary.

Summary

We may summarise this discussion as follows. Inflation is a device for regulating the rhythm of economic expansion: it is designed to raise profits at the expense of other incomes and to foster the accumulation of capital. It is an alternative to other methods of control which involve direct intervention in the workings of the economy, either to reduce costs so that profitability is increased, or to alter the way in which decisions are taken so the economy can function with a lower rate of profit. Governments resort to inflation because they are (1) unable or unwilling to tackle the basic problems which arise in the course of economic development, and (2) are unwilling to face a crisis of sufficient magnitude to resolve these problems. But inflation deals with symptoms and not causes, and the economy adapts to take account of rising prices, so that ever larger doses of inflation are required to keep the patient healthy. Eventually, this approach becomes impractical and the state is faced with the choice it originally tried to avoid. Either it must intervene to tackle the basic problems, or it must provoke a crisis in the hope that this will cure the patient. In reality, of course, governments usually take an intermediate position and opt for a combination of intervention and crisis. Indeed, intervention and crisis are not simple alternatives, for the crisis itself makes possible new forms of intervention which were not previously feasible.

Thus, crisis, intervention and inflation are all associated with the general problems of economic expansion, and are all, in some way or other, methods of regulating this expansion: crisis acts as a purge which periodically clears away obstacles to further expansion, state intervention is a form of surgery which removes these obstacles directly, and inflation is a palliative which provides temporary relief and allows the economy to tolerate these obstacles for a time. The modern state relies on all of these methods, and the exact combination in use at any moment depends on the nature of the economic problems, the character and effectiveness of the state apparatus, and the political situation.

III. WORKERS AND CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT

It should be obvious from what has been said, that the working class is always a factor in the situation. Slogans like 'Their crisis, not ours', or 'Wages do not cause Inflation' express the determination of workers to resist capitalist blackmail and may help in mobilising much resistance. But, by themselves, they are inadequate and may even be counter-productive if they prevent a correct understanding of the role of the working class in modern capitalism, and its ability to influence events.

The most elementary way in which workers can influence events is by defending themselves, and resisting measures designed to solve the problems of capitalism at their expense. For example, if prices are raised or new taxes are levied on them, workers may seek higher wages in compensation; or if capitalists try to make them work more intensively, workers

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may refuse. Quite apart from its obvious and immediate economic effects, such resistance has important political effects. Suppose the government is pursuing a strategy whose success depends on a reduction in working class living standards. A determined defence of these living standards may make the whole strategy impractical and thereby provoke a political crisis. The outcome of this crisis depends, of course, on the actual circumstances under which it occurs, and may be either favourable or unfavourable to the working class.

Economic Offensive

At a more advanced level, workers may go beyond purely defensive struggles and launch an economic offensive designed to win them higher wages (or better conditions). As we have seen earlier, there are a variety of ways in which the state can respond to such an offensive.

(1) The state may create the conditions under which firms can raise prices and take back some of what they have conceded in the wages bargain. However, if workers are determined, this is not a permanent solution because it leads to even greater wage claims and ultimately to an explosive inflation.

(2) The state may prevent price increases so that capitalists cannot pass on their higher costs to the consumer. This will have the immediate effect of squeezing profits, and capitalists may respond in several ways. They may reorganise production and adopt more advanced techniques so that costs are reduced and the rate of profit is restored to its old level. Thus, pressure for higher wages may act as a stimulus which forces capitalists to modernise the economy. But, clearly there are limits to this process, and, beyond a point, higher wages lead to a reduction in profits. At first this may be accepted by capitalists and cause no real problem, but, if profits are severely squeezed, capitalists refuse to invest and the result is a crisis. So clearly, after a certain point, higher wages result in crisis rather than growth.

(3) The state may decide that a more positive policy is required, and may take concrete steps to satisfy working class aspirations. This may involve a re-allocation of existing resources, away from such items as arms expenditure and upper class consumption in favour of wages or social services. Or, at a more fundamental level, it may involve a whole new strategy of intervention in the private sector to promote faster economic growth.

Thus, depending on the response of capitalists and the state, the outcome of a wages offensive may be inflation, crisis, or a faster rate of economic growth.

Britain's Decline

As an example of the significance of economic struggle consider Britain during the 1950s and '60s. During most of this period British governments gave a rather low priority to domestic economic development, and devoted both resources and energies to the creation of a world role for British capitalism. This involved rebuilding the City of London as a world financial centre, facilitating overseas investment by big industrial firms and supporting a huge military establishment. It absorbed resources which could have been used productively at home, and was accompanied by a laissez-faire economic policy of non-intervention in the private sector. As a result, British industry failed to keep up with its rivals and economic development was relatively slow. Clearly, such a process of relative decline must eventually lead to severe problems and, indeed, in the late 1960s Britain entered a prolonged period of crisis. Now the crisis itself is no surprise, but what is strange is that it took so long to manifest itself, and that for 15 years our ruling class was able to follow a strategy which is now widely agreed to have been suicidal. Why was this? Part of the answer lies in the behaviour of the working class. British workers, despite propaganda to the contrary, were not very militant in this period and put up with a rather modest increase in their living standards. Wages rose fairly slowly and the state responded by allowing prices to go up at a moderate pace. In consequence, profits remained fairly high and the whole system remained viable. So, the suicidal strategy of our ruling class was made possible by the quiescence of British workers.

Suppose workers had been really militant and demanded a much faster rise in their living standards. What would have happened? At first, the state might have responded by increasing the rate of inflation so as to protect capitalist profits in the face of rising wages; or it might have simply provoked a crisis to 'teach the workers a lesson'. However, if workers had persisted in their demands, neither inflation nor crisis would have been an adequate answer and the state would have been forced to do something more positive. It would have been forced to abandon its pretentious strategy for overseas expansion, and given priority to the domestic economy. Thus, a more militant stance by workers would have forced the government to step in and modernise the economy. So we reach the paradoxical conclusion that British capitalism declined, not because workers were too militant, as many people say, but because they were not militant enough and were willing to foot the bill for a suicidal strategy which put overseas expansion before domestic development.

The Alternative Policy

The preceding example of post-war Britain may suggest that blind economic struggle, provided it is militant enough, will in the long run always succeed, and that really the working class has no need for

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politics. Nothing could be further from the truth. In the first place it is difficult to unify the working class in a prolonged economic struggle unless this is linked to a broader political perspective which gives workers some idea of how their demands can be met. Without such a perspective, workers are, like anyone else, easy victims for bourgeois propaganda which preaches that there is no alternative to the present situation and that, instead of battering their heads against a brick wall, workers should reconcile themselves to the inevitable and submit to the dictates of capital. Thus to sustain an effective movement for economic advance or resistance, the left must of necessity adopt a political approach. This does not mean simply preaching socialism in the abstract; it also means putting forward a concrete set of proposals for dealing with immediate economic problems—the so-called "Left Alternative". Under present conditions in the advanced capitalist countries such a left alternative would not be a revolutionary programme, but rather a set of reforms which, if implemented, would bring certain material benefits to the working class and, by challenging the undisputed authority of capital, would destabilise the political situation and lead to demands for further change.

Quite apart from its use in mobilising workers in the economic struggle, an alternative policy has several other benefits. It helps create a *political* movement in the working class by raising wider questions of political power and making clear the actual limitations of economic struggle. It also helps organised workers escape from their isolation and forge links with other elements of society, such as unorganised workers, pensioners, students or the 'middle' strata. To the extent that workers fight a purely economic struggle, they often appear to these other elements of society as a purely sectional group whose interests are not necessarily those of the population as a whole. The existence of such a division between organised workers and the rest of society both weakens the internal cohesion of the trade union movement, and prevents the emergence of the broad popular alliance which is required to establish socialism. An alternative policy can help overcome this division by placing the economic demands of workers in a wider context—and linking their economic struggle to the more general battle for political change. The proposals contained in the alternative policy would not just benefit organised workers; they would also benefit other sections of society. If these other sections can be convinced that the alternative policy is in their interest, their attitude towards organised workers will change and they may become valuable allies, rather than the actual or potential enemies which many of them are at present.

Thus, an alternative economic policy is beneficial in at least three ways. It helps mobilise and sustain workers in economic struggle; it raises their political consciousness; and it helps build an alliance between organised workers and other sections of society.

The Wages Struggle

The above discussion has important implications for how the wages struggle should be fought. The trade union movement contains many diverse elements and there is a strong temptation to avoid or play down political questions so as to avoid controversy and unify the movement. This approach, however, has major limitations and in the long run is disastrous for the left. In the first place, as we have already mentioned, sustained working class unity in the economic struggle is only possible if politics is placed firmly in command. Unless this is done, the sought-after unity will either never materialise or will soon disintegrate. In the second place, if politics is pushed into the background, the left is forced to appeal to purely sectional interests within the working class. This is not only divisive within the movement, but it stores up trouble for the future by creating traditions of struggle which make the transition to socialism more difficult.

These failings have been seen in the recent campaign against the social contract. There has been a widespread, although by no means universal, tendency for the left to submerge its politics altogether and appeal to purely sectional interests, or else to put forward political positions in an abstract way without linking them properly to the economic struggle. The demand for higher money wages and for a return to "free collective bargaining" have often been made as though they were simply ends in themselves, unrelated to questions of political change and an alternative economic policy. As a result, instead of achieving victory based on maximum unity, as it hoped, the left has suffered a setback and the working class movement is deeply divided. This is, in my opinion, the inevitable result of the left's failure to link economics and politics in a coherent way. The "Left Alternative" is not merely something to be tacked onto the end of a string of economic demands, it is the essential framework upon which economic demands should be based and within which economic struggle should be fought.

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The Sixtieth Anniversary of the October Revolution

Bert Ramelson

(The author is the Industrial Organiser of the Communist Party.)

1977 marks the Diamond Jubilee of the October Revolution.

No other event in the history of civilisation has ever been commemorated by as many and varied peoples in all parts of the globe as will be this anniversary of October 1917.

And rightly so. For that great revolution was a major watershed in the history of humanity. It marked the beginning of a new epoch in the history of humankind.

October 1917 most certainly has specific significance for the peoples of the Soviet Union. It marked the smashing down of the prison bars of the "Prisonhouse of Nations"—the old Czarist Empire—and laid the foundations for new forms of co-operative relationships between its many nationalities and peoples.

It made possible the transformation of a vast semi-feudal, semi-capitalist country peopled in the main by an impoverished, illiterate population, into one of the most advanced industrial countries, with the highest rate of literacy, one of the highest proportions of graduates per head of the population, and the total abolition of poverty: above all, it made possible the rational planning of all its resources, thus enabling as a consequence of socialist planning, continuous expansion of its economy for over half-a-century once the post-civil war effects were overcome. As a consequence it ensured a continual improvement in the living standards of its people.

But it would be fundamentally wrong to see the events of October 1917 as being of importance only, or even mainly, to the peoples of the former Russian Empire.

Above all, the significance of October 1917 for the mass of the world's population lies in the fact that the October Revolution was the starting-point of an irreversible process whose culmination must and will lead to a qualitatively different world than has existed hitherto.

It unleashed forces which will not come to rest until the realisation of humankind's dream of a world free from "man's exploitation by man"; of the weaker nations dominated by the more powerful ones; of the creation of divisions amongst the people on the basis of religion, colour, sex, or age, facilitating the domination of the minority over the majority; above all, with the emergence of a classless society on a world scale, the root causes of war will have been eliminated.

If hundreds of millions on every continent will be celebrating the 60th anniversary of the 1917 Revolution—as undoubtedly is and will be the case—it is precisely because millions of non-communists and also millions who may at the present stage of their development not have a socialist objective, nevertheless realise the tremendous beneficial impact that that great historic event had on their lives.

Colonialism

Tens of millions of men and women of all colours and inhabitating all points of the compass, who have succeeded in their struggle to shed the yoke of colonialism and gained their national independence, are well aware that their success in their liberation struggles is closely related to the successful revolution 60 years ago.

The emergence of the USSR following October 1917—the first break in world imperialist hegemony—not only weakened imperialism's ability to withstand the various liberation struggles, but the USSR, by its principled moral and material aid to those fighting imperialism for their independence, ensured their victory.

That is why the liberated millions who may not as yet be committed to construct socialism, nevertheless see a direct link between their successful ending of their colonial status and the October Revolution.

The ending of colonialism does not, of course, automatically end the exploitation of the previously enslaved peoples by their previous imperialist overlords.

Imperialism doesn't give up so easily. Having been compelled to grant political independence to most of their previous colonial possessions, imperialism has and is striving to perpetuate its economic exploitation. "Colonialism is dead! Long live neo-colonialism!" became its slogan.

The struggle against neo-colonialism is in many ways even more difficult than that against colonialism—because the issues are often blurred, and

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alliances between imperialism and sections of the indigenous, emergent bourgeoisie are forged.

And in this hard struggle against rapacious imperialism's determination to prolong neo-colonialism, the material, moral and political help of the USSR and other socialist countries is of inestimable value.

The existence of favourable markets for their products, the provision of technically skilled personnel and advisors, as well as the advanced machinery and equipment, so essential for laying the basis of genuine independence, economic as well as political, these facilities provided by the socialist world without strings, is a powerful weapon in the fight against neo-colonialism.

That is why the countless millions who have been liberated already from the imperialists' grip, and the many who are still today bitterly fighting to end oppression and neo-colonialism, knowing that their reliable friends in their struggle are the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, will be celebrating the 60th anniversary of October 1917 as if it was, and as in a sense indeed it was, their Revolution too.

We are justifiably rejoicing today at the fact that the last fascist bastion in Europe has now fallen.

But in our rejoicing it is important to recall the role and sacrifices of the Soviet Union, in the life and death struggle against nazism and fascism, that prevented fascism from over-running our continent and from becoming a dominant, oppressive force for a considerable period in the history of our times.

The necessary economic strength and will to fight is inconceivable if the USSR had not, as a consequence of the October Revolution, proceeded to convert a backward agrarian, semi-industrial, semi-feudal state into a mighty industrial socialist nation with a population determined at whatever price to prevent the destruction of the new social order they have created.

Thus it can be said that today we are marking the 60th anniversary of an event which played a major role in preventing the emergence and consolidation of fascism as the dominant force and major form of capitalist rule over a wide part of the world.

And for this reason, too, the 60th anniversary of the birth of the first socialist state is an occasion for celebration by all those who abhor fascism in whatever guise or form it may appear.

Detente

And if today there are good grounds for believing that the threat of global war is no longer as great as it seemed a couple of decades or even a decade ago, it too can be traced to the consequences of 1917.

The passionate desire for peace played a big part in making 1917 possible. The first decree of the fledgling Soviet government was a call for a just peace.

Since then, successive Soviet governments have made peace the cornerstone of their foreign policy.

And today the continuous initiative by the Soviet Union and the socialist countries, on the basis of their tremendous economic development, have so changed the balance of world forces that world imperialism can no longer disregard such initiatives, enabling the first shoots of detente to surface and grow.

Thus, as a direct result of 1917, for the first time the peoples of the world can, with some justification—given vigilance and a readiness to fight against efforts to sabotage detente through anti-Sovietism—look forward hopefully to a future without world war and the annihilation of generations of men and women.

This assumes particular significance at a time of the deepening general crisis of capitalism. For it is precisely when the general crisis deepens that capitalism seeks, as one of the ways of resolving it, the mass destruction of surplus capacity in large-scale war. Detente makes such a "solution" much more difficult than in the past.

And as we have pointed out earlier, the change in the balance of forces flowing from the October Revolution, facilitating the phasing out of colonialism and the development of the struggle against neo-colonialism, has put obstacles in the way of capitalism's other traditional way of finding a "solution" to its crisis, namely the stepping-up of the exploitation of the former colonial world.

The stubbornness of the attack on the living standards and the fighting organisation of the working class—the trade unions—in the industrial capitalist countries, in their desperation to combat the present crisis of capitalism, risking sharp confrontations with the working class, can only be understood fully if we take cognizance of the changes in the world, making other traditional ways to overcome crises—wars and intensification of exploitation of the Third World through a variety of mechanisms including gerrymandering the terms of trade—if not completely ruled out, at least considerably more difficult.

But the only way out left and therefore pursued by the industrial countries—prolonged periods of stagnation, inflation and lowering of living standards—is also finding increased resistance. The "long boom" of the post-Second World War period, which marked a "hiatus" in the general crisis of capitalism and enabled a considerable advance in the living standards of the working class in the advanced capitalist countries, was also

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to a considerable extent a consequence of the October Revolution.

A major factor in the "long boom" was the pumping in of billions of dollars through "Marshall Aid" and other means to restabilise capitalism for fear of the spread of socialism from the east in the post-war era. And the existence of the socialist world, with its economic stability and growth, was undoubtedly a factor during this period of the "long boom" in the relative ease with which the ruling class made concessions to the working class struggling for security of employment, higher real wages and better working conditions.

Crisis

But by the very nature of capitalism the general crises could only be abated, not resolved for good.

With the re-emergence in full force of the general crisis today the ruling class are seeking to filch back the concessions made in easier times.

But the calculations made by the ruling class which inclined them to yield under pressure for fear of the example of a crisis-free socialist world on the work force, were based on a realistic analysis; the days when capitalism dominated the world and therefore unemployment and periodic cuts in living standards were universal and were more easily accepted by the working class as a way of life and hence had to be accepted as such, is no longer true. The working people, seeing that the socialist world is free of the rampant inflation, stagnation, mounting unemployment and erosion of living standards, will not readily accept crisis as a natural catastrophe which must be accepted and borne patiently, even though they may be critical of other aspects of life in the socialist countries.

Hence the developments on a world scale, flowing from 1917, are of tremendous help to the working people of the world in their struggle to achieve socialism.

Socialism, as with any social form of society, is not static but is constantly changing and developing.

In this jubilee anniversary year the Soviet Union is adopting a new Constitution reflecting the great changes that have taken place in that society, making possible the development of those aspects of democracy which only socialism enables. And here I want to touch only on one but important aspect of the Constitution.

What a contrast between the realities in the two world systems today this aspect of the draft Constitution illustrates.

At a time when over 300 million men and women in the capitalist world and over 16 million in the industrialised so-called advanced capitalist countries are unemployed, the new socialist Constitution institutionalises the reality of the right to work.

When in the most advanced countries in the capitalist world, tens of millions are condemned to homelessness, the socialist Constitution provides the citizens in the socialist countries with the right to a home.

Overcrowded schools and the almost total absence of nurseries and kindergartens goes hand in hand with unemployed teachers and the closure of teachers' training colleges in our country. The new Socialist Constitution in contrast guarantees the constant development and enrichment of education, culture and leisure for all.

Socialist democracy

These aspects of democracy—such a vital and important element in working class democracy—are incompatible with capitalism, but are an integral part of socialist democracy and not surprisingly, therefore, find a place in the Constitution of the USSR.

But it would be wrong to assume that those aspects of democracy, broadly described as civil rights, which exist to a greater or lesser degree in various advanced capitalist countries, are not as important and vital to socialist democracy.

These rights, and the extent to which they exist, have been won in the course of long and bitter struggles by the working class, often in alliance with other strata of the population.

In a socialist society, it is not only essential to retain them, but to extend them and deepen their meaning, and above all ensure, through the participation of the people, that they are implemented to the full and not merely "rights on paper" and largely ignored.

As Comrade Brezhnev said at the 25th Congress of the CPSU, "genuine democracy is impossible without socialism and socialism is impossible without a steady deepening of democracy".

This affirmation of the need for a steady deepening of democracy is of the utmost importance in grasping that the process of developing democracy in the Soviet Union is far from having been completed.

Indeed the disclosures at the 20th Congress of the great distortions and criminal murder of the tender shoots of democracy following the October Revolution, in a country that had no democratic traditions, did untold harm, not only in the crimes against countless Soviet citizens, but also in the slowing down and distortions of the development of both the economic socialist base, as well as the cultural and social superstructure.

Nor can it be said that all the consequences of that period, which in shorthand generally goes

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under the name of the 'Stalin era' or 'Stalinism', have not left their mark on the present.

Especially is this the case in the degree of intolerance towards and treatment of those who challenge the accepted views and policies of the state and party.

Undoubtedly the Stalinist era and some of the present attitudes and handling of individuals and ideas challenging the policies and cultural concepts of the socialist society detract from what would otherwise be unqualified admiration of the achievements of the socialist societies, and to that extent an accelerated growth of the forces fighting for socialism.

However, it would be wrong to argue that the "Stalin phenomenon" or the present shortcomings in the application of the principles of civil rights were and are the direct and necessary consequences of the October Revolution.

On the contrary, as the CPSU itself argued in the analysis made at the 20th and 22nd Congresses, that far from it having been the inevitable consequence of October 1917, it was a distortion of and in contradiction to the laws laid down by the Bolshevik Party—the leading force that made the October Revolution possible.

National strategies

Marxism-Leninism has always based itself on the assumption that the realisation of socialism, the form which socialism will assume, will vary in accordance with the historic conditions, working class traditions and institutional developments in each country.

But it is a fact that if today a growing number of developed industrial countries in the capitalist world are evolving strategies for socialist revolution not based on civil war but on a combination of extra-parliamentary struggle and constitutional elections; if today such countries can envisage working class power being consolidated and socialism being built in a multi-party socialist democracy—that too is in no small measure due to the changes in the balance of world forces.

The existence of the powerful Soviet Union and the development of the socialist world has ended an era when imperialism was the dominant world force, able and determined to crush by outside intervention the threat to capitalism in any country.

It is this change in the world situation which is an important factor extending the areas where the strategy of non-civil war, non-insurrectionary transformation of society will become possible.

Thus, in this respect too, the constantly changing balance of forces is facilitating the struggle for socialism.

October 1917, which opened up the way to the ending of imperialist and capitalist hegemony and started the process which today has reached the stage of the existence of two world systems, including a socialist system on a world scale in over a dozen countries and spread over three continents, is also a powerful help to workers all over the world in their struggle to achieve socialism in their own way in their own country, wherever it may be.

Of particular significance in this respect today is the visible contrast of the economic superiority of socialism.

Today, the temporary post-war illusions of a constantly expanding and crisis-free capitalism, which unfortunately affected millions of workers throughout the capitalist world for a while, is smashed.

Crisis—economic, social and political—unprecedented and worldwide, is gripping the whole capitalist world.

Mass unemployment, stagnation of the economy, massive unused capacity, rampant inflation, are features of capitalism today.

Gains of social advance, democratic trade union rights, such as the right to free collective bargaining, are being undermined.

Nor is there any confidence, even amongst the apologists for capitalism, of finding a way to alleviate, let alone achieve an early end to this crisis.

By contrast, despite the fact that in today's world there is bound to be a measure of interdependence in the world economy and the global market, the USSR and the other socialist countries have been relatively unaffected by this crisis.

Continuous and consistent growth of their economies, the fulfilment of the right to work, relative stability of prices, continuous and consistent improvements in the living standards of their people and the extension of many aspects of democracy, including industrial democracy, is the characteristic of the socialist world.

This living contrast between the socialist and capitalist societies cannot but help those in the capitalist world fighting to transform their countries from class-divided exploitative societies to socialist forms of society.

The Communist Party of Great Britain, like many other Communist parties, was founded as a direct result of the experiences of its working class, the Great October Revolution, and springing from both, a deepening of the understanding of the indispensable role of a Marxist revolutionary party, which is one of the many profound contributions in the development of Marxist theory made by Lenin.

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Solidarity

We are proud of the role our Party and the British working class played in developing solidarity with the Soviet masses' struggle to consolidate the revolution against world imperialist aggressive efforts to strangle it at birth.

The British Communist Party was founded on August 1, 1920. On that very day it was faced with a major attempt by British capitalism to launch another offensive against the young Soviet Republic. Indeed the first circular that it sent out was concerned to stop a new British war of intervention.

All the militant sections of the British Labour movement, including the organisations that eventually merged into the Communist Party, had already taken their stand against the British Government's attempt to crush the Russian Revolution by armed intervention.[1]

The British Socialist Party (BSP), the Socialist Labour Party (SLP), the Workers' Socialist Federation (WSF) had all fought with great courage to bring that intervention to an end and to impel the British Government to give diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union.

A London "Hands Off Russia" Committee was formed on the initiative of London shop stewards at a conference in January 1919. By mid-1919, a national "Hands Off Russia" committee had been established and by the end of the year there were a considerable number of local committees.

This was a truly united body of the British working class, without bans and proscriptions. Amongst the trade union leaders who served on its leadership were A. A. Purcell of the Parliamentary Committee of the TUC, a foundation member of the Communist Party, C. T. Cramp of the NUR, Alex Gossip, General Secretary of NAFTA, Fred Shaw and David Kirkwood of the ASE, John Hill, General Secretary of the Boilermakers. Amongst the vice-presidents there were three who were also foundation members of the CPGB—Tom Mann (General Secretary of the ASE), George Peet (Secretary of the National Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committee Movement), and William Gallacher of the Clyde Workers' Committee.

Harry Pollitt became its first National Organiser, and Arthur MacManus (later to become first Chairman of the CPGB) was amongst its leading propagandists.

At the end of April 1920 the Polish invasion of the Soviet Union opened. Again there was a strong militant and united struggle to halt the intervention. And, in the stopping of the *Jolly George* carrying munitions on May 10, 1920, Harry Pollitt personally played an important role. The WSF in East London was particularly active.

At first the Polish armies had advanced rapidly into Soviet territory. But, by the end of June, they were in headlong retreat pursued by Budenny's cavalry, and forced to the very gates of Warsaw.

The British Government, which had not been concerned (on the contrary indeed) by the advance of Polish troops into Russia, was deeply disturbed by the Soviet advance into Poland. By early July 1920 the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, was speaking the language of war and by early August, the Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, was speaking in terms of ultimatum.

It was the British workers, with the newly-formed Communist Party in a leading role, that organised hundreds of "Hands Off Russia" meetings, formed the National Council of Action (with two Communists) and local Councils of Action all over the country and averted a war on the Soviet Union.

Contact

Official contacts between the British and Soviet trade unions date back to the early 20s. And today it is no secret that the British Trades Union Congress played and plays a major role in dismantling the artificial barriers set up by reaction during the cold war to re-establish on-going relations between the trade unions of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries and our own and other western trade unions.

When the fascists attacked the Soviet Union in 1941, the British working class's efforts in the production of arms and weapons to send to the heroic Red Army reached unprecedented levels of productivity as a sign of solidarity and admiration of the Soviet Union's role in the common fight. But the solidarity was not a one-way affair. The Soviet workers were in the forefront of expressing their solidarity with the British workers whenever they were involved in whatever form of struggle.

Despite the deprivations and shortages of the Soviet people in the aftermath of the Civil War, their massive support, not only moral but material, to the miners' struggle in the early 20s, culminating in the General Strike, played an important role in maintaining the fighting morale of the miners in their long and bitter struggle.

And that solidarity with the British working class, as with all workers in struggle, has been maintained throughout the past sixty years.

That is why we can confidently say that far wider sections of the masses of our country than the Communists will find ways of commemorating this most important event of our epoch.

[1] For a summary of this and the early struggle against intervention by the CPGB see James Klugmann —*History of the CPGB*, Vol. I, 1919-24, pp. 78-87.

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Students, Education and the State

Ken Spours

(The author is the National Student Organiser of the Communist Party)

I. CRISIS OF EDUCATION

Post-school education is at present experiencing a considerable crisis. Cuts in expenditure have devastated the Teacher Education sector, the concept of the Liberal University has come under attack, and the nature of 16-19 year old education is under discussion. Amidst the crisis of the British economy, the blame for inadequate economic performance has been partially transferred onto the shoulders of school and post-school education.

The Great Education Debate has taken place to persuade educational and public opinion that our attitudes must change. No longer must education be seen as a right for all, but will be assessed in the ways it contributes to economic performance. The Government's strategy on education has sought not only to redefine the purposes of education, but to lead to an erosion of the democratic fabric of our institutions. The Great Education Debate and the attendant calls for greater centralisation and stricter control of academic life make it clear that the ruling class considers post-school education a site of struggle, and one to be transformed.

The left, however, have been far less clear in their approach towards the current condition of education. No one likes cuts in education, if only from the point of view of self-interest. But there is little recognition of the need for a strategy to preserve and transform education.

Crisis of Corporate Politics

The left in the student movement are not exempt from criticism. With the exception of officials inside N.U.S., the student left has not in recent years seriously addressed itself to the conditions and future of post-school education.

This, however, is a reflection of a deeper malaise of the left in the student movement. There exists in addition to the crisis of education, what can be termed the crisis of 'corporate politics'[1]

There are, perhaps, five main characteristics of this crisis. The first and founding feature is *economism*. Many on the left have infinite faith in the 'bread and butter' issues of student politics. Grants, rents, housing, have been seen as issues around which the mass of students could become politicised, providing revolutionaries were in there doing the propaganda work on the need for socialism. The real problem with this approach is not that grants, rents, etc., were not issues around which the mass of students could become interested. Clearly, they have been involved, and in their thousands—but usually the left did not approach the issues in a way in which long-term ideological and political issues could be raised. There has remained a massive gap between students struggling around grants, and on the other hand, appreciating the need for socialism, and no amount of socialist propaganda can fill that gap. There is the need to see the issue of grants, not just as an issue of material self-interest, but as an ideological and political question of who has access to education. Though the issue of grants may begin at the level of material self-interest, it can quickly break through that logic to the wider question of the future of education. It is, perhaps, only at this more general level of struggle that the need for socialism is ultimately appreciated.

Economism is more deadly than ever these days because there is not a single domestic issue in student politics today which can be separated from the future of education. Grants, fees, overseas students, beg the question of the nature and future of our education system. Economistic analysis keeps them as separate questions and keeps socialism as a propagandist vision rather than being a result of building levels of struggle upon one another.

Self-Interest and Sectionalism

The second feature of corporate politics is the politics of *'self-interest and sectionalism'*. Self-interest in the student movement is exercised by groups from the whole political spectrum, though they appear in essentially different forms. On the right, the Federation of Conservative Students champion "Welfare Student Unionism"—student unions existing to cater for the narrow interests of their members, as members of a club or society

[1] This conception is derived from Gramsci's distinction between corporate and hegemonic politics.

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or a sporting federation. This narrow right-wing sectionalism differs from what can be termed the 'militant sectionalism' of the left. The left has recognised the need for student unions to protect the wider interests of students as a social group, however these issues have been posed in ways that have enabled only limited numbers of students to become involved. The issues of grants and fees, posed in terms of self-interest, have increasingly failed to involve the mass of students and have not united them ideologically. At the end of the day, scientists and arts students, so often divided, were no closer together because of militant left campaigns. The ultra-left have carried this approach to its logical conclusion by posing 'activists in struggle' versus the apathetic rest, and students versus the rest of the College or University.

Militant self-interest has not solved the problem of student unity, and has not even confronted the problem of alliances of students, staff and trade unionists. In this sense it has a distinct resemblance to social-democratic politics. This logic differs markedly from an approach of general struggle around the future of education in which the different forces can achieve deeper unity in themselves and can develop increasingly workable relationships and understanding.

A third feature of corporate politics is its *inadequate democratic* conceptions. Both the right and left, again, suffer from this. In the last couple of years in the student movement there has been a 'crisis of representation'. Students, in Universities especially, have become less integrated into their unions, with a feeling that those unions do not represent or involve them. The ultra-left especially fetishises the participatory General Meeting, and in other colleges has even abandoned the quorum to make the system function. The right have fetishised 'Representative Councils', and have chosen to ignore the attributes of participatory assemblies. The sterile polemic between these forms of democracy does not answer the immediate needs of student unions and the ways in which students can become involved and therefore 'represented'. Perhaps a combination of both types is needed, together with the development of new forms of representation and democratic involvement especially in the academic field.

Students and the Working Class

A fourth feature of corporate politics is the tenuous relationship it builds between *students and the working class.* Up till now it would be true to say that the left has seen a two-fold relationship between students and the working class. The first is that in the process of collective rather than individual struggle around concrete demands, students would undergo many of the same experiences as trade unionists. This would lead to an appreciation that students could develop a relationship with the organised working class itself.

The second aspect of the student-worker alliance was direct student support for working class struggles, exemplified by the experiences in the miners' strikes of 1972 and 1974.

There is now a crisis of this conception. It is not as easy as it was to involve students in collective concrete struggle *per se,* and perhaps more important is the fact that militant industrial struggle has not been imprinted on this generation of students as it was on the last.

A vital link has been missing in the left's conception, and that is a third relationship in which students struggle alongside other forces in education, and ultimately the working class, to transform their own sphere of life—post-school education. This can be seen as the linking mechanism between collective student action and direct assistance to the working class—it also constitutes a potentially democratic relationship between the social forces, since it is an area of mutual concern.

Without this third relationship, students only meet the working class 'periodically' in eras of militant struggle, besides which action around bread and butter issues can produce 'sectionalism' as much as it produces the idea of the working class as allies.

In this situation the ultra-left conception of generalising a struggle is to add wider and more militant demands. A more correct conception of generalising struggle and creating a more *permanent* relationship between students and the working class is to open up the question of transforming education.

The fifth characteristic of corporate politics constitutes the essence of its crisis, namely that this approach cannot solve the main problems of the period and cannot unite the majority of students in a search for these solutions.

Economic militancy has failed to understand the ideological and political strategy of the right and what is happening to education. In doing so it has failed to outline a strategy to effectively defend education, and most certainly has little conception of how the student movement is to move forward. In this sense "militant economism" often calls for returns of past victorious scenarios. In response to swings to the right it calls for a heroic stand around socialist principles, even at the risk of these becoming unworkable political conceptions.

Finally, the corporate conception does not understand that the political balance has changed in the student movement and that serious fragmentation of student unity has taken place. What is really called for is a new basis of unity in which scientists and artists, those interested in sports and

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culture, the politicos, and the non-politicals, can unite to defend and transform the process of which they are all a part. Can this conceivably be done on the basis of asking everyone to be a socialist, or is some other conception of unity needed to take these diverse forces forward?

The crisis of corporate politics constitutes the crisis of the left. From the late 60's to about 1974, this approach reaped immense results—students unions developed autonomy, N.U.S. expanded and stayed consistently left. Important defensive battles were won, and students were acclaimed for the support they rendered the working class. But national politics have changed: education is now fighting for its life. The conceptions and methods of the left must develop qualitatively to face this period. The left must be able to throw off the accusations of being narrow, undemocratic, sectarian and destructive. The mass of students will accept this when the left are seen to be concerned with the unity of participants in education to solve the problems which face us all.

The need for a Strategy of Democratisation

The corporate conception of the left can be transcended by the adoption of a strategy seeking to democratise education. Struggle around access to education, and democratisation of its content and structure can bring together the interests of students and the working class. Students and other intellectuals can desire diversity of academic life and a close relationship between theory and the real world regardless of their class origin, since these are the necessary bases for the enrichment of intellectual life. Secondly, they constitute *extensions* of many current and increasingly unfulfilled liberal and social democratic values, which if placed in a wider context of political struggle can take on a revolutionary meaning. The working class on the other hand, requires democratisation of education in order that its members acquire both vocational skills and the ability to think in a critical, creative way.

Looking more to the future, the working class will need scientists, technicians, administrators, pholosophers and educators, both from its own ranks and from other strata. These relationships should not be instrumental, but based on the fact that those not of the working class will accept its leadership on the basis of its present and past efforts to transform their areas of existence. In this sense, the working class struggles to establish its leadership in all spheres of economic, political and cultural life prior to the transition to socialism.

Ultimately, the working class and other social forces must struggle now to build the alternatives in education, etc., upon which the future of education can be constructed. The future socialist education system, in which all classes and groups will participate, will depend very much on our efforts to democratise the one we've got now.

The idea of generalised struggle around post-school education, as a contribution to a more substantial relationship between students and the working class, must lead us to analyse the nature and "function" of students as a social force.

II. STUDENT AND CLASS RELATIONSHIPS

(a) Social origin—Social destination: Students do not constitute a social class as such since they are not wage labour, or more narrowly, producers of material wealth. Today they are a very diverse set of young people, both in terms of social origin and ideological outlook, and are preparing to be organisers, technicians and educators in the world of production and the complex apparatus of the state. Students are no longer just the sons and daughters of the ruling class. Advanced capitalism requires an army of organisers and skilled labour and so members of other social groups have to be used to help organise society. The crucial question here is the ways in which these people are connected, socially, politically and ideologically to either the capitalist or working class. These 'connections' do not arise automatically in a purely economic sense as a result of economic crisis, but are constructed, broken, reconstructed, etc., through the efforts of either of the classes to establish its political and ideological leadership: e.g. back in 1968, the ties between students and the capitalist class were strained because of bourgeois ideological crisis and youth rebellion, together with anti-Vietnam War opinion. This ideological relationship has been very much reconstructed since then and anti-establishment opinion has faded considerably amongst students. Nevertheless, in a social sense there is a considerable basis for the progressive orientation of students. In the 1960s the increase in the numbers of students led to a breakdown of the idea of an elite group and what emerged was a student body from a very diverse set of backgrounds, largely of the middle strata. It is interesting to note that the majority of students come from backgrounds in which there are few working class traditions of 'them and us', but in which the problems of ideology, freedom and control, rather than the simple capital/labour conflict are predominant.

In terms of 'social destination' most students emerge as skilled wage-labour, but a minority will go into production as such. Most will end up as 'functionaries' in non-production trades, and will have to join trade unions/associations to protect themselves against the insecurities of being part of such a vast strata of functionaries. The main points to be stressed are that while socially

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students can move close to, can organise in a similar way to, and even in a sense become part of the working class, this lays the basis but does not constitute the essence of a workable political and ideological relationship between students and working class.

(b) **Functions and Roles of Students:** If students cannot be definitively and permanently located socially in terms of class relations, then we must look at ideological and political factors. It can be argued that it is the nature and direction of the function or role of students which can ultimately cement a relationship with either of the classes. Students committed to diverse and critical education, to democratic participation and the general ideological and political struggle this involves, will have quite a difference orientation as future civil servants than those who accepted restrictive content, authoritarian relations and narrow self-interest. On the other hand to be involved in struggle around self-interest as a student, no matter how militant, does not equip the future functionary with the necessary critical faculties to fight to transform their own world, whether they be technicians or administrators.

The reason why so many students quickly lose their militancy once they leave college isn't simply because they were petty-bourgeois from the start, but because narrow economistic student militancy leaves one totally stranded and ill-equipped in the 'outside world'.

(c) The Concept of Intellectuals[2]**:** How can we understand more accurately the notion of students as intellectuals, as having 'functions' which can be transformed, and the development of their relationships with either of the classes, especially in view of the fact that students are not organisers in society but are preparing to be such. Secondly, many students are not involved in purely academic elaboration, but in vocational courses on day-release. Can we term these people intellectuals?

It has been argued that every class attempts to create within itself a strata of intellectuals who give the class a sense of self-awareness, help unify the class and render it able to lead other groups in society. This is especially important in advanced capitalist society where there is a complex class structure in which intellectuals enact the social and ideological cementing role.

If the working class is to be able to lead other groups, and 'cement' them together in an enduring alliance, then the working class must develop its own intellectuals. Intellectuals of the working class, however, will be quite different from those of the bourgeoisie. The working class must develop its own intellectuals in which, for instance, producers can develop qualitatively their intellectual capacities by attempting to organise and guide the world of production even before socialism is established.

Secondly, the working class must win over those 'intellectuals by function'—academics, scientists, etc.—to a permanent relationship with itself.

At present, however, the ruling class has a formidable array of specialist intellectuals as allies and organisers in production, and the working class has hardly begun to develop its own intellectuals and its alliances with intellectual strata remain very limited.

While advanced capitalism has been very successful in building the relationship between intellectuals and the dominant class, there are nevertheless points at which this relationship can break down and be replaced by a growing relationship with the working class.

The first of these is the problem of hierarchy, in which directive organising functions in the state apparatus sometimes stretch from positions of leadership right through to jobs of almost a manual character. A two-fold problem arises in this respect. The first is the democratic question of control, to define one's own function as teacher-artist-administrator. Not surprisingly for these personnel removed from the direct conflict of capital and labour, these often constitute the most perceived and real forms of oppression.

Secondly, these strata are not immune from economic crisis and have been compelled, often against their professional ethic, to collectively organise to protect their material conditions.

Another factor affecting the connection between these groups and the capitalist class, is that many intellectuals do not automatically identify with the capitalist economic order, e.g. the University academic. Many of their traditions are pre-capitalist, and they like to think of themselves as autonomous and objective—this is the case especially in the fields of arts and social sciences. This autonomy is very much under pressure by attempts either to squeeze out these disciplines as economically non-viable, or to impose authoritarian conditions. Many 'autonomous' intellectuals have discovered that Marxism helps them perform their critical tasks in a more rigorous way. In this sense a struggle for democracy in education is the very life-blood of an academic.

This is not the experience of the intellectual who has been developed in close relationship to the world of production (management courses, etc.). These groups have developed a more 'organic' relationship with the capitalist class.

By fusing these two factors of 'hierarchy' and the distinction between those intellectuals of an

[2] See Antonio Gramsci: Intellectuals—'Selections from the Prison Notebooks', 1971.

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'autonomous' and more 'productive' orientation, we can begin to understand the 'class location' of lecturers and students by way of political and ideological functions rather than just in social terms.

The more consistently organic intellectual in post-school education is the one which combines seniority (hierarchy) with a sector of education developed by capitalism (Polytechnics) and a discipline related to production (physical or engineering science). Directors of natural physical sciences at Polytechnics have quite a record of close integration with the capitalist class. Such an intellectual at Teeside Poly. is a nuclear adviser for NATO.

The consistently least organic is the junior university intellectual in the humanities who combines notions of autonomy, suffers the problem of control, and teaches a potentially critical discipline. The low organic relationship in these sectors has allowed Marxism to enter academic work as a critical tool and in itself presents now a major focus of conflict.

(d) Distinctive Nature of Students: Students are obviously distinct from other strata of intellectuals insofar as they are not functionaries as such, but are preparing directly or indirectly to enter these roles.

Because of this they suffer common oppressions of control (disciplinary codes and sometimes social restrictions) no matter what discipline or sector they belong to, on account of their trainee position, and also because they are considered as youth.

In the late 60s, however, the development of youth culture did a great deal to produce an element of socio-cultural unity amongst students, which did not exist before, and which to a large extent does not exist now.

These factors help explain the ambiguous attitude the capitalist class has had towards modern students. On the one hand they were an investment for the future, but in the meanwhile many were liabilities. The strained ideological connection between students and the dominant class has in the past brought calls from the right-wing to close down sociological departments and art colleges, but gradually these relationships have been, in part, reconstructed because student militancy did not have a strategy to transform the function and roles of student intellectuals and grapple with the question of freedom and control in a permanent way.

(e) Transforming the Functions of Students: The real political problems concerning students do not just arise from social origin but the experiences they have as 'trainee intellectuals', and the way these functions will be applied once they become fully-fledged functionaries.

At present students are divided from each other in a whole series of ways. Scientists rarely become politically involved with social scientists; sports types hate politicos; further education students think university students are domineering. At a wider level many students think lecturers are not interested in their future and immediate problems, and lecturers think students aren't really interested in education. Militant economic struggle has not helped these divisions; in some cases it has even produced more acute sectionalism.

At a general level the problem of democracy and control is critical for all students, if they are to be able to conduct their period of "education and training" to develop their self-governing capacities to the full. But it is significant that the different sectors present different problems of transformation. Though the objective of the working class must be to overcome the distinction between intellectuals and non-intellectuals and between one type of intellectual and another, nevertheless we must start from a position of affirming that these differences do exist.

University students, their functions often isolated from society, must be brought into closer relationship with the real world. Most important is the creation of a close and more active relationship between academic conceptions and the needs of society. In this respect Marxists should encourage all active conceptions of the world, rather than a monopoly of Marxism in an attempt to overcome the rupture of bourgeois academic life. The latter suffers from idealistic speculation on the one hand, and an instrumental approach to theory on the other. A democratic and socialist approach should attempt to reduce and eliminate this fragmentation of outlook and practice.

At the other end of the binary system, the further education student is related more closely to the world of production. The search for an organic educational principle in this sector is to ensure that a general, cognitive education is received in addition to and in relation with vocational training. The student of the further education sector, lying between school and higher education, too, suffers acute oppressions in the form of control and content. Here, too, the battle for democracy can be fought, though in the first instance, in terms different from the University. At present it is an expanding sector of education, and there is a possibility of intervening to give it a progressive form. In terms of immediate education of members of the working class, the battle for this sector is of critical importance.

Our task should be that in the process of democratising post-school education and transforming the functions of students, we create meeting-points between the disciplines, the sectors, other educa-

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tional forces, and of course, between these and the working class.

III. POST-SCHOOL EDUCATION AND THE STATE

(a) "State and Civil Society": The problem of post-school education and the state has to be explored to see to what extent political intervention and transformation of education can take place.

Many on the left view the state as a relatively compact, coercive and governmental set of structures surrounding the ruling class, in which there is little chance of penetration and transformation by the proletariat.

Historical analysis of advanced Western capitalist states shows, however, that active consent and ideological control constitutes a fundamental element of political rule, adding new dimensions to the nature of 'state life'.

The bourgeoisie developed, historically, private institutions (elements of the educational system, press, voluntary organisations) of a largely ideological character in their struggle against Absolutism. The development of these institutions into the public life of the state represents what we term 'civil society', those elements of the state most responsible for the organisation of consent.

Another distinctive feature of these aspects of the state is that it is through these more diffuse institutions that the working class initially makes its political intervention—witness the struggle for a basic education, a poor man's press, development of local government, and representation in the House of Commons. If we are to accept a workable definition of the state, then it embraces all the institutions and relations of both a practical and theoretical character by which the capitalist class maintains its rule.

Post-school education lies largely in the sphere of civil society—being diffuse, and concerned with (amongst other things) the development of consensus in society. Moves towards authoritarianism provide immense opportunity for democratic struggle in a field in which the bourgeoisie abandons the 'ethics' of education and in doing so loosens its ideological ties with intellectuals, who previously accepted its leadership.

Post-school education contains many contradictions of a historical nature, one of the most fundamental being traditional academic notions which compromise the more economic ambitions of the capitalist class. The 'Liberal University' of the 60s, which spawned so much student militancy and which has allowed Marxism a limited place in academic life, was not just the result of militant working class struggle, but also because of the traditions and personnel which the bourgeoisie had to rely on for educational expansion.

The relative autonomy of this sector from the world of production and from the governmental state (coercive apparatus/executive/civil service/judiciary, etc.) has made them important spheres of ideological struggle, not only because of their role as innovators in the field of science, philosophy and the arts, but because in this process of innovation, there has been a conflict of quite diverse currents of thought, rather than a simple clash between capitalists and proletarians. In this sense it is important to locate the *progressive* and *regressive* elements in academic and cultural life and unite the whole strata of academics and students in the development of an enriched, more meaningful and democratic education.

The overall task of the working class is to intervene to defend and transform 'civil society' as a basis for further advance and transforming the state as such. This means the building of relations in education between students, lecturers, and other social forces, to reorganise elements of education rather than just defending what we've got. In this way, we pose the politics of revolutionary democratic transformation.

(b) Mass Organisations and the State: Political activity of the working class and its allies, especially in the development of its own intellectuals, has to be conducted first through its own structures. Unlike the ruling class, which develops its intellectuals primarily through the state apparatus (education, press, civil service) and the world of production, the working class must develop its intellectuals in different ways. First through its own political parties; secondly and to a lesser extent, its own mass organisations (trade unions) and finally through those elements of the education system it has 'occupied' and transformed, though this is very limited at present.

It is essential that we understand the relationship of the mass organisations of the working class to the section of the state in question if the development of intellectuals is to be a systematic one. If the State plus civil society can be seen to embrace the whole of political life, then organisations of the working class form part of this complex. The question being, under whose control (ideological and political) do these elements of political life actually lie.

In eras of growing bourgeois hegemony, trade unions have been integrated more closely into the dominant bloc.[3] When the dominant bloc has achieved a purely coercive dominance, as for instance, under fascism, trade unions are integrated by way of the syndicalist conception.

[3] This is a conception which embraces the economic, political and ideological complex and relationships established by either the capitalist or working class.

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Alternately, in periods of mass corporate struggle the quest for autonomy of trade unions has been seen as a prime question. The next stage of development for the working class organisations is the offensive political role in transforming society —trade unions taking up wider issues than wages and conditions. In this sense we can conceive of the mass organisations of the working class becoming elements of civil society—part of the progressive bloc stimulating change in other sections of society.

Modern student unions are, in this respect, unique. Unlike the trade union, the development of which has been moulded by the wage-labour/capital conflict and therefore has a tradition of defending workers' interests in the narrow economic sense, students unions already fulfil wider functions. Removed from the world of production, they have incorporated many diverse roles, cultural, political and economic, in the form of levels of representation.

In the early 60s, under the auspices of the right-wing, student unions represented students in a sectional way. Unions were understood as an aspect of the corporate life of the University/College. They would organise clubs, societies and sports, but not campaign for wider student interests. These were supposedly catered for within the University/College conception of the Academic Community.

Student politics since then has been a constant struggle to develop a corporate level of representation—the notion of the campaigning union, together with the battle for union autonomy. The Broad Left more than any other political force embodied this approach. The interests of students/intellectuals cannot be divorced, however, from the organisation and content of education. In recent years, Communist students have become increasingly aware of the limitation of corporate student politics—fragmented campaigning, narrow interests, divisive rather than unifying militancy, absence of workable relations with other forces in education. What we must propose is yet another level of representation, distinctive in itself, yet giving new forms and expressions to the two previously outlined. This level must embody a politico-ideological struggle related to education and its future.

In the achievement of more 'universal' functions, student unions clearly become an element of civil society insofar as they become an agent for the development of a new unity and consensus amongst progressive forces, and in a limited way, a producer of the new organic intellectual of the progressive bloc. The educative functions of students unions in relation to its members will grow tenfold if this new level of representation is formed. Constituting an element of civil society firmly under the control of progressive intellectual forces, students unions can stimulate change in Universities/Colleges, in fact the production of a more coherent orientation of the colleges themselves. In contrast to the early 60's when colleges defined the nature of students unions, the latter could now be one of the agents of the transformation.

IV. POLITICAL FORCES AND DEMOCRATISATION

(a) Cutbacks:

Every major question faced by students today, whether it be grants, fees, overseas students, cannot be separated from the condition of post-school education in an era of financial stringency. The question that everyone will ask, however, is whether it is possible to transform the content of education, its infrastructure, and at the same time develop democratic participation, in an era of cut-backs. Is it not necessary at least to restore the economic basis of education before any of this can take place?

Our analysis of post-school education, its personnel and its relationship to governmental state reveals still a series of contradictions all of which constitute sites of struggles. Cut-backs not only mean less resources in education but greater centralisation and rigidification of the curriculum. We are engaged therefore not only in an economic but an ideological and democratic struggle against cuts in education.

At present it would require a new government of a left nature to reverse the cut-backs in education on the basis of an alternative economic strategy, and while the left merely shouts 'Stop the Cuts', educational restructuring, aided by the Great Education Debate, is proceeding unchallenged right under our noses. The most effective defensive position against cut-backs and capable of developing offensive capacity for wider change, is not the purely propagandistic war against the cuts, but the fight for democracy in content and structure of education. People will fight against the cuts when they are sure of what they are fighting for. In this sense an anti-cuts alliance is first generated around democratic issues. All too often the intellectual in education, when confronted with a call to oppose the cuts, hesitates because of the acceptance of the argument that there isn't enough money to go round. Opposition to the destruction of education can only be generated when confronted in ideological terms about the nature and prospects of the educational process itself. A principled opposition to cuts is necessary, but to retain the purely propagandistic approach means the liquidation of active political intervention in areas

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of education affected by cuts, and the generation of a feeling of hopelessness.

A strategic approach to the transformation of post-school education is therefore not only possible in a period of cut-backs, it is imperative if students and lecturers are to be made aware of the democratic political and ideological issues at stake and an alliance of those previously inert forces achieved.

(b) Stages of a Strategy:

To possess a strategy means not only to have long-term aims, but having the capacity to intervene at present. Where can the approach to transform the nature of education begin in this period of stringency? Logically, it must start in an area of post-school education relatively autonomous from areas of immediate economic decision-making, the latter of which are at present outside the control of the left. The areas of ideology and control constitute, however, more immediate sites of struggle, though we will have to look at these areas in a different way than we did previously. Take the question of course content: the aim of democratisation of content is not simply the production of counter-course, but the transformation of the *mainstream* of academic work. In the process of struggle to introduce diverse content, democratic relations at departmental level, counter-course may emerge as a tactic, but in itself cannot generate the unity of students and staff in a permanent sense. A number of dimensions of a strategy for democratisation can be outlined and conceived as *stages* of development.

(i) The immediate issue of grants, fees, overseas students, raise the issue of access to education. These campaigns must be channelled in a direction in which students defend their own interests, but do not fall into sectionalism. The strategy for democratisation maps out a direction for all of these campaigns and draws them together in generalised struggle around access to education.

(ii) Course content, structure and democratic participation tackled initially at an institutional level. This is the level where any democratic alliance in education can be generated within the institution itself at departmental level.

(iii) The question of relations between sectors and alliances between institutions and L.E.A's against centralisation requires a balance of forces not presently in existence, to be operative, and must be seen as a later stage.

(iv) Financial structure and its transformation, because of its close integration with economy and governmental state constitutes a further stage still.

Another element of strategy surrounds the democratisation of student unions, as an essential element in the process of transformation. Most students unions presently see educational change as largely peripheral, at best some have an executive officer with academic portfolio. The majority of students unions have the potential but currently lack the structure to contest the college at the level of departments. A strategy to democratise post-school education has to contain within it the further democratisation of student unions.

(i) To unify the various forms of democracy in unions rather than counterposing them as do the Federation of Conservative Students and the ultra-left.

(ii) Union General Meetings (U.G.M.) should have supreme power of general policy-making, but general meetings cannot adequately represent social scientists or members of a club or society.

(iii) Other levels of representative and democratic forms have to be created and harmonised into an overall democratic conception of participation and control.

Student Representative Councils (S.R.C.) are not automatically reactionary providing they are not counterposed against the U.G.M's. Representative bodies play an essential role providing popular control can be exercised. Instead of attempting to abolish these structures, the left should seek to transform their functions in which they can represent and unify specific activities, especially at departmental level. This will mean the development of union structures beneath the S.R.C. in departments, which bring the union permanently into academic issues. The development of these primary bodies would mean that S.R.C's would have to respond to democratic control from above (U.G.M.) and from below (departmental forums).

(c) Alliances and Democratisation:

Communist students constitute a part of the Broad Left (comprised of Clause 4 students, Communists and non-aligned socialists). This force has been the mainstay of N.U.S. for nearly five years. Alliances are not, however, just the result of the will-power of the forces involved, but a response to historical necessity.

In 1973 the Broad Left became the organised expression of the corporate development of student union politics, development of student unions, mass mobilising around concrete demands. The need for corporate expression still remains, but new ideological/political questions need to be confronted if the pressing problems of education are to be solved and students' consciousness raised fundamentally in the process. Facing new conditions, we need new approaches.

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But what of the development of the Broad Left in the light of new proposals on strategy which implicitly involves a criticism of our past? We see the Labour/Communist alliance as the fundamental feature, not only of student political life, but also as a pillar of the Communist Party's national conception. The key question is the wider movement wherein this socialist relationship can stimulate a wide democratic movement.

The ideological environment is not what it was in the late 60s/early 70s. The anti-establishment outlook amongst students is largely past history, but willingness for change still exists in more unrelated and specific forms. The role of the Broad Left within this movement will be to provide a permanent political and organisational basis for the development of a wide and unified movement. The creation of a democratic movement, itself constantly changing, is the road for the Broad Left from that of the party blocs (Clause 4 and C.P.) to that of mass movement.

The socialist nature of the Broad Left Alliance and the wider democratic movement lies in its capacity to establish the preconditions of socialist transformation. The creation of concrete alternatives in education and the unity and awareness created in that process avoids the fractured approach of economistic struggle and the propaganda injections of the need for socialism. Struggle *per se* does not make evident such a need. Democratic struggle to transform all areas of society has, however, implanted within it, the logical necessity of socialism to complete all the tasks the movement sets itself. In this respect we see the struggle for democracy and the struggle for socialism as inseparable.

(d) Role of the Communist Party:

In the recent past Communist students have contributed fundamentally to the struggle for mass students unions, involvement of students in militant political struggle, in fact, towards the corporate development of student life and the creation of collective behaviour.

The political life of the student branches have nevertheless been highly fragmented, due to the absence of a unifying strategy in Communist work. Almost every branch suffers some sort of tension between union activity (mass work) and the independent role of the branch, often concerned with ideological activity. Complete submergence into union work, or a sense of ideological detachment unfortunately is a common feature of our work, a reflection of what can be termed 'student economism'.

The role of the Communist Party in the development of a strategy to democratise post-school education will fall into a number of levels, and give a unity to its own work.

(1) To give a democratic direction to all immediate campaigns and to build student unity and alliances with other forces, especially in education itself.
(2) To analyse the nature and history of the institutions in determining the progressive and regressive trends and forces currently in operation.
(3) On the basis of this analysis to locate areas of intervention in course work, structure, etc., and act as the 'innovator' of strategy.
(4) To develop the intervention of the union in this area of work, and the proposal of a programme of the democratisation of its function.
(5) In the area of ideological work, to raise questions of the role of Marxism in transformation of content. It will be important for Communists to stimulate democratic opinion in the colleges against the authoritarian Right-wing. In this respect the traditions and conceptions of the Communist University can be carried back into the colleges.
(6) To develop new areas of work at the departmental level; individually or collectively Communists can always offer clarity and purpose of political struggle, to develop the alliances of democratic and socialist forces.
(7) Constantly to seek to transform democratic activity to a more explicitly socialist and Marxist consciousness.

The role of the Communist Party emerges as *innovator* of strategy and theory, *unifier* of democratic forces, and the *transforming* agent of political forces. Union and mass work, theoretical/ideological efforts and the independent political role of the Communist Party can become intimately related in the overall struggle for democratisation.

At a broader level, Communist students must present themselves as members of a national political party, whose programme THE BRITISH ROAD TO SOCIALISM seeks to unify workers, intellectuals, and a vast army of social, cultural and political forces. Whilst Communist students will always present the national and international conception of the Party, the most crucial and fertile relationship between Communist students, the Party as a whole and the wider progressive movement, is founded on the creative application of the Communist party's national programme to their own sphere of life.

COGITO

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Discussion Contribution on:

Definitions of the Working Class

Ernest Eisler and Michael Seifert

Alan Hunt's article in the July issue of *Marxism Today* seeks to redefine the working class in terms of a 'broad' definition. He describes the working class as being "composed of all those who sell their labour power and are the non-owners/controllers of the means of production". This is a broad definition indeed, and goes beyond previously accepted Marxist categories. At the same time it clearly has great political appeal: if it is true, all but a tiny minority of the British people are working class. It is important, therefore, to ascertain whether or not this new definition is correct.

There is a risk here of the reader associating the 'broad' definition of the working class with a positive non-sectarian strategy, and the 'narrow' definition with sectarianism and dogmatism. This would be unfortunate. Sectarianism is a matter of political attitudes. The definition of classes is a matter of Marxist scientific method.

Arguments about definitions usually strike those who are politically active as being pointless and academic. In this case, however, the 'definitions' (or, more particularly, the analysis underlying the use of definitions) are crucial to correct political strategy. It goes without saying that if the Communist Party in Britain today is a revolutionary party, it must be a party of the working class; it must have its roots in the working class; it must command the respect and loyalty of the working class. If the Party builds its base among other sections of the people under the false conception that these sections constitute the working class, the Party would be in danger of going adrift. On the other hand, firmly rooted in the working-class (as the British Party always has been) it can safety recruit from the widest sections of the working people.

A correct analysis of class structure is also essential to the formulation of effective policies for building class alliances. The objective interests of different classes, and even of sections of classes, must be understood. Without this understanding how can a party of the working class put forward programmes to unite the mass of the people in a broad democratic alliance?

Hunt's Broad Definition

What then is wrong with Hunt's new definition? Firstly, it is too broad and all-inclusive. Secondly, it is without foundation in Marxist theory and betrays a 'sociological' concern with definitions and outward appearances.

Consider first its broadness. With a stroke of his pen Hunt increases the size of the proletariat to an extent undreamt of by previous generations of revolutionaries. "All those who sell their labour-power and are the non-owners/controllers of the means of production" includes clergymen; members of the army, navy and airforce; civil servants; High Court judges; university professors; and even our friends in MI5.

Hunt himself begins to see the absurdity of his new definition, and tries to rescue it with the aid of ad-hoc qualifications. Management is excluded from the working class because it controls the means of production, and State functionaries, such as 'generals, police-chiefs and top civil servants' are excluded because they control the means of control. These qualifications are introduced into the definition of the working class without any theoretical analysis of the concept of 'control' and its relation to Marxist categories. The concept raises more problems than it solves, and is a first step on the road back to the old theories of a 'managerial revolution'.

Hunt's Narrow Definition

Before leaving Hunt's article, let us look briefly at his alternative 'narrow definition'. There are, he says, two versions: one "defines the working class in terms of those that produce surplus value" (Nicos Poulantzas is quoted as the best exponent of this definition); the other definition is "in terms of manual industrial workers". These two versions, according to Hunt, "do not fundamentally diverge"; "we can ignore the differences between these two variants"! Having thus confused the issue, and having thus simplified and trivialised the fundamental concept of surplus value, Hunt 'refutes' the narrow definition by stating the undeniable fact that workers in service industries can produce surplus

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value! He then proceeds to clinch the matter with a devastating rhetorical question: "If the working class is defined in terms of industrial workers then the question must be posed: to what class do non-industrial workers belong?" And here we meet Poulantzas again. He has made, says Hunt, "an important attempt" to answer this question: they belong to the "new petty bourgeoisie"! (Poulantzas is the mirror image of Hunt: while the latter converts sections of the working people into proletarians, the former turns large numbers of proletarians into a new petty bourgeoisie.)

Finally, having 'refuted' the narrow definition on a *theoretical* level, Hunt reduces it to a mockery on the *political* level. Adoption of this definition, he affirms, will lead 'unavoidably' to "a political position in which the working class would have to go it alone. . . . Such a position leads inexorably towards the adoption of an insurrectionary strategy . . . " (p. 223). It takes an effort to remind oneself that Hunt is referring here to a Marxist analysis of class that has hitherto been widely accepted throughout the world Communist movement, an analysis which —as he points out in the course of his article—is central to the strategy of that hotbed of insurrection: the French Communist Party.

Analysis v. Definition

Let us now escape from Hunt's sociological quagmire and seek a more secure footing in the works of Marx and Engels.

To start with, we must get away from Hunt's pre-occupation with *definitions* and turn our attention to the *analysis* of classes. It is important that we analyse classes correctly and that we recognise the essential features of the class struggle. We can then afford to be flexible in our use of the term 'working class'. In a technical economic discussion one must adhere strictly to precise terminology. In a broader context one may refer to the 'working class' in its more popular meaning. But it is only safe to do this when we know what we are doing.

Capital and Surplus Value

Let us begin with the concept of surplus value. In the production of commodities, whether goods or services, the capitalist lays out a part of his capital in the purchase of a unique commodity: labour-power, the value of this commodity being paid in the form of wages or salaries. Having sold his labour-power, the employee performs both 'paid' (necessary) and 'unpaid' (surplus) labour which becomes incorporated in the commodities being produced. Part of the value of the commodities, therefore, consists of surplus value, which is appropriated by the capitalist. (Labour which thus produces surplus value was termed by Marx 'productive' labour.)

Under conditions of modern State monopoly capitalism, with *the production of commodities* being undertaken by large nationalised industries, the term capital must include capital owned by the State: e.g. British Leyland, the National Coal Board, British Airways, the gas and electricity industries, post and telephone services, British Rail, British Petroleum, British Transport Docks Board, etc.

Industrial Workers

Workers employed by private and State capital in the production of commodities and producing surplus value are to be found working on the land and on the sea, in factories, chemical works, offices, laboratories, in the mines, and on the roads and railways. They are 'hourly paid' and 'staff', wear white and blue collars, and perform technical, scientific, manual (both skilled and 'unskilled'), administrative, and managerial labour (insofar as the latter involves necessary productive co-ordination and planning). This vast collective 'productive' work-force, under the domination of industrial capital, is the creator of the aggregate surplus value upon which the whole edifice of capitalist society rests.

The great wealth of commodities produced by the industrial labour force must then be exchanged through a chain of purchases and sales (i.e. it must 'circulate'). To the extent that this involves changes of location—transport and distribution—the labour process adds value (and surplus value) to the commodities. A large proportion of those employed within the retail and wholesale trades are in fact engaged in the physical distribution of commodities, and are therefore adding value to them. In carrying on this work they are members of the transport industry; they are industrial workers.

Commercial Workers

Strictly speaking, the 'circulation' of commodities (their purchase and sale) involves no physical movement, merely transfers of title, changes in legal ownership. Workers involved in this process (commercial workers), such as book-keepers, brokers, shop-assistants and other workers employed by merchant capital, do not add value to the commodities dealt in. The process is one whereby the value (and surplus value) produced by the industrial workers is realised. It is a process necessary to the functioning of capitalist society.

Merchant capital appropriates from industrial capital a part of the surplus value in the commodities exchanged. With this it pays its employees. The greater the proportion of 'unpaid' labour it extorts from these commercial employees, therefore, the greater is merchant capital's profit: a greater amount of surplus value is realised for a given outlay of wages/salaries. These workers, therefore,

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are also exploited by capital, but unlike the industrial workers they are paid their wages/salaries out of surplus value.

Commercial workers are also employed by industrial capital to handle purchases and sales. They include accountants, book-keepers, salesmen, and other commercial staff usually employed at a company's head office. Their position is the same as that of the employees of merchant capital: they are exploited, but their labour adds no value to the commodities; and their wages are paid out of surplus value. In this sense they constitute a part of a company's non-productive overheads.

The circulation of commodities (including money) also gives rise to finance capital, with a large number of employees, mainly in banking and the large financial institutions. They are in a similar position to the employees of merchant capital: they perform a necessary function under capitalism in the circulation of money and capital; they are exploited in the same way as commercial workers; their labour adds no value to commodities; and their wages/salaries are paid out of surplus value. (Large manufacturing companies always employ a few specialised head office personnel performing this financial function, alongside the commercial employees.)

Surplus Value

The aggregate surplus value extracted from industrial labour by industrial capital is passed on in many forms: a part goes to merchant capital and appears as merchants' profits; part to finance capital as interest and dividends; part to other shareholders in industrial capital; part to landowners as rent; and part to the State as taxes. All sections of the exploiting classes cream off portions of the aggregate surplus value. Some is then spent by these classes on their servants, professional advisers (lawyers, accountants, etc.) and all kinds of hangers-on, sometimes in the form of wages, sometimes as fees. Where wages are paid, they are paid as revenue, they are not laid out as capital in the expectation of recouping a profit. However badly, e.g. domestic servants, may be paid, therefore, they are not 'exploited' in the strict sense of the word.

State Employees

The two categories of workers dealt with above—employees of (a) industrial and (b) merchant/finance capital—constitute the section of the working people who together are employed by capital. They are involved in the manufacture and circulation of commodities, the production and realisation of surplus value. The wages/salaries paid to them constitute part of the capital (variable capital) advanced by the capitalist/State capitalist in the circulation of capital. Both categories of workers are exploited by capital, and are directly involved in the class struggle between capital and wage-labour.

We next come to those workers who are employed by the State as the State, but not as State capital; workers who are not engaged in the production or circulation of commodities. They include civil servants, judges, members of the armed forces, police, teachers, social workers, doctors and nurses, dustmen, librarians, architects and surveyors employed by local government, etc. They also include employees of the church, trade associations, voluntary bodies, etc. All these workers receive wages or salaries, but in the form of revenue, not capital. Their employers do not advance money in the form of wages in the expectation that it will return to them with added profit.

These workers are not involved in the sphere of commodities; they are not 'productive' workers in the Marxist sense of the term. Although the labour of many (e.g. in health and education) is socially useful and necessary, they do not create surplus value. Furthermore, not being in the employment of capital (private or State owned) they are not directly involved in the class struggle. (This is not to say that they do not fight to increase their earnings, etc., often as part of the organised trade union movement.)

As in the case of the employees of merchant/finance capital, employees of the State and local government also derive their income from surplus value.

The Self-Employed

Next is the category of the self-employed, which

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">TOTAL WORKING POPULATION OF UNITED KINGDOM, 1975, 24,968,000</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">WORKERS EMPLOYED BY CAPITAL (STATE & PRIVATE)
17,720,000</td><td rowspan="2">STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMT EMPLOYEES, AND OTHERS EMPLOYED OUTSIDE THE SPHERE OF COMMODITIES
5,319,000
(e.g. armed forces, health workers, teachers, civil servants)</td><td rowspan="2">SELF-EMPLOYED WORKERS
1,925,000</td></tr>
<tr><td>WORKERS EMPLOYED BY INDUSTRIAL CAPITAL (STATE & PRIVATE)
15,078,000
(e.g. agriculture, fishing, manufacturing, mining, construction, transport, communications)
PRODUCERS OF VALUE (INC. SURPLUS VALUE)</td><td>WORKERS EMPLOYED BY MERCHANT & FINANCE CAPITAL
2,642,000
(e.g. banking, retail trade, insurance)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">(To scale) Compiled from Dept. of Employment Statistics published in Annual Abstract of Statistics 1976. HMSO.</td></tr>
</table>

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includes freelance workers, such as artists and writers, the independent professions, taxi-drivers, many artisans, etc. There is a wide range within this category from the freelance who in reality may be a 'wage-labourer' for a major client, to the small petty-bourgeois.

Social Classes

The above analysis deals with the relation of different sections of the working people to capital, surplus value, and the State—relations that are to some extent hidden from view. What we must now consider is the way in which these underlying relations are reflected on the surface of society, in social classes and class consciousness.

On the surface, British society is a hierarchy of many *social* classes, from the aristocracy, through the upper-middle, middle, and lower-middle classes, to the working classes. The subtleties of this gradation, and the many little tell-tale signals attaching to each minor sub-class, are well-known and understood by all who grow up in British society. It is a system of superiority and deference formed over hundreds of years, with class-distinctions surviving from the pre-industrial era. Thus at any given time social classes reflect previous class divisions as well as recent or contemporary class structure. Our social culture, an ideological amalgam born out of past class struggles and other influences, is so complex there is no space to analyse it further here.

What we can do, if there is anything in the historical materialist method, is to examine the effects of current class structure and class struggle upon social classes and in particular upon the working class movement and class consciousness.

Three Main Categories

From the above analysis, three main categories of employees emerge:

1. There is a vast section of working people, employed by industrial capital (both private and State-owned), who produce value (including surplus value). It is a mighty force on whose shoulders the whole of society is supported. This section of workers (the industrial proletariat) is exploited by the aggregate industrial capital, and the contradiction between wage-labour and capital is here absolute and unqualified. There is no objective reason for the industrial proletariat to pause or hold back in its struggle against capital.

2. There is another large section of the working people who are wage-labourers exploited by capital, but who do not produce value. This section consists of employees of merchant and finance capital—the commercial proletariat. They too are engaged in the struggle between labour and capital, but the contradiction is not completely unqualified since their existence is dependent upon the extraction of surplus value from the industrial proletariat.

3. There is another large section of the working people: those employed by the State and local government outside the sphere of commodity production and circulation, such as teachers, doctors and police. This section is engaged in a wide variety of functions, some useful, others destructive. These workers are often dissatisfied with their remuneration and working conditions, and are becoming increasingly militant on these issues. However, they are not involved as a class in the struggle between capital and labour.

Historical Materialism

Given the extraordinary complexity of the development of the cultural/ideological superstructure, it is a powerful vindication of the historical materialist method that the economic categories analysed above should be reflected as clearly as they are in social classes and class consciousness.

It is no accident of history that the workers from whom industrial capital extracts surplus value are the most class conscious, the best organised, and the most militant in the class struggle. Hunt attributes the 'central role' of industrial workers in the Labour Movement to their 'historical experience'. This explains nothing. Servants, professional soldiers, clergymen, and many other wage/salary earners, have existed just as long if not longer. Mere duration in time does not produce class conscious militancy. The root cause, which Hunt conspicuously ignores as it undermines his definition, is *exploitation*.

It is also no accident that commercial workers, employed by merchant/finance capital, while organised in the Labour Movement and engaged in class struggle, find it more difficult to show wholehearted solidarity with other workers. Although knowing little or nothing about concepts of surplus value, etc., it is as if they half-sense that the exploitation of industrial workers provides the source of their own wages and salaries. This would apply equally to 'commercial' employees working within the same enterprise as industrial workers.

We can also appreciate why State employees who are outside the sphere of commodity production and not employed by capital can easily adopt a range of different political and social attitudes, depending to a large extent upon the jobs they perform and their class backgrounds. Those coming from working class families will often retain a sense of class solidarity. Those performing socially useful work for relatively low wages will often tend to align themselves with the Labour Movement. On the other hand, those whose functions directly

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serve the ruling class will have a greater tendency to side with capital, against labour.

Hunt states that the newer section of the working class, (he means the non-industrial workers), while they 'lack experience of organisation and collective solidarity', have an advantage over the industrial workers in that "they are less deeply imbued with economistic practices and ideology" and "have the possibility to integrate a range of wider social and political questions". The weakness Hunt sees in the industrial workers, as opposed to these 'newer' sections, is the "dominance of a social democratic or reformist political consciousness"—a negative consequence of their "historical experience" (p. 224). Unfortunately, Hunt gives no examples to support this extraordinary comparison. He should have consulted Clive Jenkins! Experience of the Labour Movement shows that it is in fact the 'traditional working class' who are more internationalist and more ready to make sacrifices for broad social objectives. But in any case, to set one section of the working class off against another in this way serves no useful purpose.

Definition of the Working Class

Let us now return to the starting point of this article: Hunt's new definition of the working class. Our conclusion is that a correct *analysis* of classes is of the greatest importance, but that a preoccupation with a *definition* of the working class is unhelpful and can be divisive. One can be very exact and precise when talking in scientific terms about abstract categories, such as the commodity, wage-labour, capital, etc. These terms must be clear and precise. But face to face with concrete social reality, rather than abstract concepts, such precision is impossible. Classes do not appear in their pure form. And real people in real circumstances rarely conform precisely to categories. We meet a worker with shares in ICI, or a capitalist belonging to a workers' party.

However, having said that definitions of social reality cannot aspire to watertight precision, they can certainly be—as with Hunt's definition—woefully wrong and misleading. We would suggest that when the term working class is used, it should describe all working people employed by capital (including State capital) in the production and circulation of commodities, whose labour adds to, or assists in the realisation of, value in commodities. In other words, the industrial and commercial proletariat.

In society as we find it, however, the boundaries of the working class are blurred. Other working people, employed outside the sphere of commodity production and circulation, can usefully be described as working class if either (a) they belong to a trade or occupation that is predominantly carried on by workers who fall within the above definition, or (b) they come from working class families and work in occupations staffed overwhelmingly by workers drawn from working class backgrounds.

Examples of the former (occupations normally employed by capital) would be building workers employed directly by a local authority; engineers employed by a hospital; electricians employed by the civil service; or carpenters employed by the church.

Examples of the latter (occupations staffed exclusively by workers from working class homes) would be: dustmen, roadsweepers, porters in hospitals, cleaners in schools, etc.

There are other occupations which cannot be called working class within the above definition, but which contain large numbers of people from working class backgrounds: e.g. the teaching profession, nurses, the police, and the armed forces. In many ways their interests are linked to those of the working class, and they have many objective reasons for seeking an end to capitalism. It is important to build alliances with these sections of the working people, even (and especially!) in the case of the armed forces where the nature of their work makes this difficult.

Resorting to Marxism

Before closing this article, we should deal with one significant comment in Hunt's essay which provides a clue as to why he should go so sadly astray on such seemingly well-trodden ground. The clue is contained on page 218:

> At the outset we should note that we can find no certainty by resorting [sic] to the classical texts of Marxism. . . .

In his search for 'definitions' he 'resorts' to the classical texts, but finds 'no certainty'. This reveals the important distinction between reading Marx in order to understand his analysis, and dipping into his works in a search for quotations. But if this is not bad enough, he goes on:

> . . . Marx, Engels, and Lenin all make use of definitions that fall into both camps. [!!]

Having divided Marxist theory into 'two camps', Hunt describes one 'camp' as being theoretically untenable (the 'narrow' definition). With an overwhelming confidence he then states that Marx, Engels and Lenin all fall into this 'camp', this untenable position. And to make matters worse, they all fall into *both* camps! To fall into an untenable position suggests a serious limitation in their theoretical understanding. To fall into both camps suggests that Marx, Engels and Lenin were all hopelessly confused. Unfortunately it is too late for Hunt to enlighten these redundant old theoreticians who presumably suffered, along with the industrial workers, from their "historical experience".

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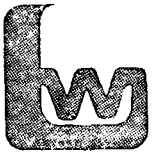

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